LITERACY IN THE LIVES OF FORMERLY-INCARCERATED AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUNG MEN: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Rabiah Khalil Abdullah

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ABSTRACT

An estimated 40,000 juvenile inmates are released from the carceral setting annually (OJJDP, 2017). Re-entry presents a host of emotional, behavioral, and academic challenges. Recidivism rates of juvenile inmates are high; many of them will experience incarceration throughout adulthood (Ayers, 1997; Foley, 2001; Gardner, 2010). The devasting impact of juvenile incarceration is disproportionately experienced by African Americans. Arrests, referrals to juvenile court, processing, adjudication, and confinement protocol reflect racial disparities between African Americans and their Caucasian counterparts (Henning, 2017; Rovner, 2014). This phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of African American young men between the ages of 18 and 30 who were incarcerated for at least three months in juvenile detention and who received a portion of their education behind bars as minors. Each participant was allotted ninety minutes for an open-ended, one-on-one, semi-structured interview. Participants indicated informed consent prior to the audio recording and transcription of the interviews. The study explored ways in which the participants characterized the role of schools, correctional facilities, and halfway houses in their formal and informal literacy development and usage. Further, the study sought the participants' interpretations of the role of literacy in their academic, economic, and social lives. The researcher considered the narrative data through the lens of New London Group's Multiliteracies framework.

The researcher's examination of participant narratives revealed the shared role of home and school environments in creating foundational literacy, the need for emotional and academic infrastructure in middle schools, the blunting effect of unstimulating coursework on the psyche and behavior of juvenile inmates, the lack of coordination

between institutions responsible for academic records, and participants' perception of the impact of literacy on high school completion, post-secondary education, gainful employment, and transformative participation in the community. Further, the researcher espied elegant ways in which African American Vernacular English (AAVE) was featured in participant narratives. The two implications that the researcher considers paramount include the need for public middle and high schools to hire re-entry coordinators for youth returning to school from detention, and the potential for universities to sponsor teacher-preparation programs offering a specialization in teaching incarcerated youth so that educators who instruct the population are equipped with an understanding of the physiological and academic needs of their students.

The following individuals served on the dissertation committee: Dr. Norma Day-Vines (chair), Dr. Eric Rice, Dr. Mary Ellen Beaty-O'Ferrall, Dr. Katrina McDonald, Dr. Mavis Sanders, and Dr. Douglas E. Taylor.

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To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity. –Paulo Freire

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I volunteered to teach linguistics classes to male inmates of a juvenile detention facility in the early spring of 2011. During an observation at the institution a few months prior, I had dishearteningly noticed that almost all of the inmates were African American. Despite my research on penal demographics, nothing could have prepared me for the faces of so many African American children behind bars. I considered for a long time what I could share with them about linguistics that they would really enjoy. It occurred to me that they may be interested in learning about nonstandard forms of English—such as vernaculars, dialects, and creoles. I assumed that the subject matter would interest them since minority groups in the United States often speak nonstandard forms of English but are usually not informed of their systematicity and legitimacy. So, the day I showed up to begin my classes, I carried some of my favorite books about African American Vernacular English (AAVE). They included *Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English* (Rickford & Rickford, 2000), *Out of the Mouths of Slaves* (Baugh, 1999), and *Word on the Street: Debunking the Myth of a "Pure" Standard English* (McWhorter, 1998). I remember carefully arranging the books in the large grey tub for scanning at the detention site. The guards glanced at me questioningly as I walked through the metal detector.

I was escorted to the room by an enthusiastic teacher in his early twenties. He interspersed the hurried tour on the way to the room with brief remarks about the students' interests, apologies for the lack of technical equipment, and expressions of

gratitude for my coming. When I arrived in the room, the students had been seated and were awaiting me. They were introduced to me quickly, just by name and age. I nodded to each as I heard his name. The oldest in the class was nineteen years old and the youngest was fourteen. A dozen males—all but one was African American. The exception was Black Hispanic. The teacher who had brought me to the room announced the need for his departure and jaunted down the hall. A fully-uniformed armed guard perfunctorily assured me that he was there to make sure that everything went smoothly.

I began the lesson by asking the students the purpose of language. They smiled petulantly, but they answered me. I wrote their answers on the board. A few of them rolled their eyes. I asked them if they had ever heard of African American Vernacular English (AAVE). They looked at each other confounded. I explained the most salient features of AAVE—zero-copula, final consonant deletion, the use of habitual-be, and the absence of 's' on verbs marking third person singular. I gave them examples of utterances in AAVE from the books I brought with me. Then they gave me examples. I pointed out the prevalence of AAVE in African American communities. We talked about slang. Their eyes sparkled with humor as they taught me increasingly derogatory slang words until the guard interrupted gruffly. I explained the distinction between slang and AAVE. I enumerated the grammatical elements of AAVE; I wrote the words, *systematic, rule-governed,* and *valid* on the board. I defined those words in detail. The students rapidly asked me questions: *Why hadn't their teachers told them this before? Why did they get in trouble for speaking AAVE in class at school? If AAVE is rule-governed, doesn't that mean that it can be spoken correctly and incorrectly? If AAVE is valid to*

linguists, why isn't it valid to teachers? Why is the English they are taught in school considered so much better?

The students were curious, upset, and frustrated. They asked to see my books. They thumbed through the pages gently; they wrote the titles on sheets of loose-leaf paper that they had brought with them. The guard walked forward from the back of the classroom. He told me that I needed to pack up; the allotted hour had passed. I collected the books and concluded the burgeoning conversation. Throughout the spring term I returned to the juvenile detention facility to complete the classes about AAVE that I had designed for the students.

During the summer of 2011, I reflected on my interactions with the youth at the detention facility. I scrutinized the notes I had taken. I thought about the intimate stories the students had shared with me about their struggles with and celebrations of language. I did not have any photographs of my students, but I could still see their faces in my mind's eye; I could still hear their voices. Each of them spoke AAVE. Each of them earnestly questioned America's disdain for AAVE and reverence for Standard American English (SAE). I remember their witty, pubescent jokes, their energy, their emotional investment, and their potential. They inspired me to embark on this dissertation project which investigated the literacy perspectives and patterns of a cohort of formerly-incarcerated African American young men between the ages of 18 and 30 who experienced a minimum of three months at a juvenile detention facility. The research questions that guided the study include: (1) How do participants characterize the role of institutions—such as schools, correctional facilities, and halfway houses—in their formal and informal literacy development and usage? (2) How do participants interpret the role

of literacy in their academic, economic, and social lives? (3) What does the narrative data of participants reveal about their formal and informal discourse patterns through the lens of the Multiliteracies framework?

Theoretical Substantiation of Institutions as Perpetuators of Oppression

Because imperialism and racism are inextricable from the legacy of educational and correctional policies in the United States, this dissertation project necessarily deferred to tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Freirean Theory for their respective conceptualizations of oppression and the mechanisms that make it possible. Accordingly, four tenets of CRT undergird this project including: 1) ubiquity of racism—which argues that racism is embedded in every dimension of American life; racism is integral to American legal, behavioral, and social norms (Coates, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012); 2) interest convergence—which maintains that gains, particularly in law and public policy, that ostensibly better the lives of marginalized people, actually promote the political and economic agendas of those in power (Alexander, 2012; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012); 3) critique of liberalism—which posits that liberals who espouse principles they consider neutral (such as color blindness) unwittingly impede actual progress (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012); 4) intersectionality/anti-essentialism—which asserts that the power dynamics that shape the themes of oppression of marginalized groups is compounded as it threads through different facets of identity—e.g. race, gender, socio-economic status—such that the nature of subjectivity is further complicated (Alexander, 2012; Collins, 2015; Delgado and Stefancic, 2012). In addition to components of CRT, this dissertation project will rely on Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed to illustrate the nature of oppression, delineate its effects on the oppressed, and to imagine the opportunities for transformation.

Demographics of Juvenile Confinement

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) reports that approximately 900,000 individuals under the age of 18 are arrested each year (2017). While the majority of offenses committed by juveniles are non-violent, roughly a third of adjudicated youth spend six months or more in confinement (Feierman, Mordecai, & Schwartz, 2015; Mendel, 2015). The financial cost is high; in a survey of 46 states, the Justice Policy Institute found that the price tag for incarcerating one minor can fluctuate between $100,000 and $148,000 annually (2014). The socioemotional costs are even higher; separation from family, friends, school, and community, especially for protracted periods of time, can have a deleterious effect on the psychological development and academic progress of juvenile inmates (Feierman et al., 2015). Some youth experience abuse while held in facilities. In 2012, the Bureau of Justice Statistics surveyed incarcerated youth; nearly 10% reported being sexually victimized while confined, and 80% of those victimized inmates indicated staff as the perpetrators of the sexual misconduct (OJJDP, 2017). According to the Annie E. Casey foundation, the risks abound for incarcerated youth, including the excessive use of force and restraints, prolonged isolation, solitary confinement, denial of access to bathrooms and water, denial of access to recreation, strip searches, and compulsory use of non-prescribed psychotropic drugs (Mendel, 2015).

Impact of Juvenile Incarceration on Academic Achievement

An estimated 40,000 juvenile inmates are released annually (OJJDP, 2017). Re-entry presents a host of emotional, behavioral, and academic challenges. It is seldom the case that previously-incarcerated youth return home, readjust to their neighborhood schools, and experience academic achievement (Foley, 2001; Justice Policy Institute, 2014). Overall, academic performance of incarcerated students fluctuates between one and several years below grade level (Foley, 2001; Ferguson, 2001). Nearly 40% of youth released from detention each year choose not to return to school; of those who do resume formal education, 16% drop out within five months, (Foley, 2001). Recidivism rates of juvenile inmates are high; many of them will experience incarceration throughout adulthood (Ayers, 1997; Foley, 2001; Gardner, 2010).

Disproportionate Impact of Juvenile Incarceration on African American Youth

The devastating impact of juvenile incarceration is disproportionately experienced by African Americans. In 2015, approximately 34% of juvenile arrests were of African Americans although they constituted 15% of U.S. youth (OJJDP, 2017); the over-representation of African Americans in the juvenile justice system is recognized as problematic by the OJJDP and referred to in their reports as *Disproportionate Minority Contact.* Disparities, which are longstanding and systemic, do not end with arrests. Joshua Rovner (2014), a researcher for The Sentencing Project poignantly notes,

> Among those juveniles who are arrested, black juveniles are more likely to be referred to a juvenile court than are white juveniles. They are more likely to be processed (and less likely to be diverted). Among those adjudicated delinquent, they are more likely to be sent to secure confinement. Among those detained,

> black youth are more likely to be transferred to adult facilities. The disparities grow at almost every step (p. 2).

The reason why African American children are over-represented in the juvenile justice system is not explained by the seriousness of their criminal offenses. A glance at the most recent data available from the juvenile courts is revealing: in 2014, juvenile courts rendered 946,855 dispositions for youth 17 years of age and under, of which 342,012 (36%) were African American (Sickmund, Sladky, Kang, & Puzzanchera, 2017). Approximately, 207,067 (61%) of the cases against African Americans were for property or public order offenses, in which no harm was inflicted on another human being (Sickmund et al., 2017). If drug use and distribution (which are aggregated in the database) are calculated as non-violent offenses, the percentage of dispositions for African American youth committing non-violent crimes rises to 70% (Sickmund, et al., 2017).

Criminality and Images of African American Youth in the Public Discourse

Crime statistics are more indicative of structural racism than actual criminal activity (Alexander, 2012; Blackmon, 2008; Henning, 2017; Mauer, 2006; Muhammad, 2010). For more than a century, crime databases and the conversations they engender in public discourse have mediated race relations in America (Henning, 2017; Muhammad, 2010). The first census on prison statistics was published in 1890 amidst Reconstruction when White America was most anxious about the integration of recently-freed African Americans into larger society (Muhammad, 2010). The census revealed in 1890, not unlike today, that African Americans were merely 12% of the population, but 30% of the prison population (Alexander, 2012; Muhammad, 2010). Caucasian social scientists of

the era heralded the crime data as irrefutable proof of the innate criminality of African Americans (Hochschild & Powell, 2008; Muhammad, 2010). However, the census did not take into consideration the Black Codes which were laws constructed in the South after the Civil War designed to control African American movement and behavior with long prison terms for infractions such as loitering or appearing unemployed (Alexander, 2012; Muhammad, 2010). Social scientists when responding to the census acknowledged neither the race laws of the country nor the attitudes of law enforcement officers, many of whom were angry about the outcome of the Civil War (Alexander, 2012; Muhammad, 2010). Accordingly, Muhammad (2010) asserts,

> For white Americans of every ideological stripe—from radical southern racists to northern progressives—African American criminality became one of the most widely accepted bases for justifying prejudicial thinking, discriminatory treatment, and/or acceptance of racial violence as an instrument of public safety (p. 4).

The invention of Black criminality as a political strategy of the post-Civil War era is similar to the emergence and subsistence of the super-predator myth, most notably articulated by Princeton professor John Dilulio Jr. in the 1990s. Henning (2017) quotes Dilulio's assertion that, "a new generation of street criminals is upon us—the youngest, biggest, and baddest generation any society has ever known," (p. 59). Dilulio's hyperbole was especially injurious to the image of African American youth because he punctuated his myth with the pronouncement that, "not only is the number of young black criminals likely to surge, but as many as half of these juvenile super-predators could be young black males," (Henning, 2017, p.60).

The murder of 12-year-old Tamir Rice, who was shot by police officers for playing with a toy gun at a park in Cleveland (Williams & Smith, 2015), is symbolic of the prevailing perception and consequent punitive treatment of African American male youth by law enforcement (Coates 2015; Henning, 2017). Notably, both officers who responded to the 911 call about a youth on the playground pulling out a toy gun that was "probably fake," were acquitted of all charges (Williams & Smith, 2015). Henning (2017) states,

> Troubling is the lingering and pervasive influence of the super-predator myth on the psyche of police and the public [….] So what do these distorted perceptions mean for young black males? They mean that black boys are more likely to be treated as adults much earlier than other youth and less likely than white boys to receive the benefits and special considerations of youth. In the context of policing, these perceptions mean that black boys are more likely to be harassed and assaulted for typical adolescent transgressions, and more likely to be perceived as culpable and deserving of punishment. Even if politicians no longer bandy about the term "super-predator," the recent shootings of black males provide substantial evidence that the fear of black boys has not subsided" (p. 62).

The Impact of School Policies on the Criminalization of Black Youth

The castigatory behavior of police officers when interacting with African American male youth on the streets, which contributes to the presence of African American males in the juvenile justice system, is being replicated in middle and high schools throughout the country (Henning, 2017; Thurau & Wald, 2009). Zero-tolerance policies coupled with the presence of police officers, also known as School Resource

Officers (SROs), in school buildings, have had a resoundingly negative impact on the welfare of youth, particularly African Americans in low-income neighborhoods. The trend of swift and punitive action toward schoolchildren for minor infractions has been documented by a variety of sources. According to Thurau and Wald (2009), "behaviors such as schoolyard scuffles, shoving matches, and verbal altercations—once considered exclusively the domain of school disciplinarians […] came to be seen as requiring law enforcement intervention" (p. 979). Speaking loudly, knocking over trashcans, or pushing past SROs in the hallway, can incur charges of assault, felony assault, vandalism, and disorderly conduct for the offending student (Chan, 2015; Ferriss, 2016).

The discretion of adults—teachers, administrators, and SROs—often determines whether student behavior is criminalized. Researchers have found that the discretion integral to the process of meting out discipline in public schools consistently reflects racial bias and that the consequences for African American males are more severe than those incurred by students of other racial groups (ACLU, 2017; Chan, 2015; Ferriss, 2016; Henning, 2017). Thus, the inequities that have plagued the criminal justice system for over a century, are manifest in a new arena—public schools responsible for educating, nurturing, and disciplining the youth of the nation (Skiba, Suzanne, Eckes, & Kevin, 2009). The disproportionate over-representation of African American males in the juvenile justice system in contrast to their Caucasian peers—which I will henceforth refer to as the *carceral gap*—exacerbates the longstanding achievement gap between African Americans and their Caucasian peers.

Pervasive Poverty and the Black-White Achievement Gap

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) declares that in every measure of academic performance, African American students trail behind their Caucasian peers at statistically-significant levels (Vannemanet, Hamilton, Baldwin-Anderson, & Rahman, 2009). Although the Black-White achievement gap persists regardless of the density of African Americans in the classroom (Bohrnstedt, Kitmitto, Ogut, Sherman, & Chan, 2015) and across socioeconomic lines (Jencks & Phillips, 1998), the pervasive generational poverty experienced by African Americans merits mention during consideration of test scores. According to the Pew Research Center's analysis of Census Bureau data from 2013, in which poverty was defined by an annual income of $23,624 or less for a family of two children and two adults, 38% of African American children were living in poverty, which was four times higher than the amount of Caucasian children living in poverty (Patten & Krogstad, 2015). Racial disparity has marred income statistics for several decades and has not subsided (Semega, Fontenot, & Kollar, 2016). According to the Tax Policy Center, the mean annual income earned for the top quintile in the United States in 2015 was $202,366; Caucasians steadily account for nearly 72% of this income distribution and African Americans make up 7% of it (Reeves & Joo, 2017). Interestingly, the mean income for the lowest two quintiles are $12,457 and $32,631, respectively (Tax Policy Center, 2015); the vast majority of African Americans earn within these lower quintiles (Donovan, Labonte, & Dalaker, 2016).

Such poverty exacerbates the vulnerability and the consequent forms of oppression experienced by African American schoolchildren and their communities

(Barber & Theoharis, 2017; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Kozol, 1991). Relatedly, pervasive segregation remains endemic to America's public schools, and African American students--who attend some of the poorest and lowest-performing schools in the nation—suffer dire consequences (Barber & Theoharis, 2017; Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Kozol, 1991). From the ooze of toxic chemicals and raw sewage into the play spaces of children in East St. Louis, to crowded windowless classrooms the size of closets in Chicago, squalid life conditions have become commonplace for so many thousands of people who live in densely-populated communities of color (Barber & Theoharis, 2017; Kozol, 1991). Indeed, 81.1% of students attending high-poverty schools are African American (Garcia, 2017). The oft-used terms *past injustices* and *level playing field* represent ironies of the disquieting and dishonest American discourse on equality (Kozol, 1991). According to Kozol (1991), "Contemporary claims based on a "past injustice" after all, begin to seem implausible if the alleged injustice is believed to be a generation, or six generations, in the past. But [these] are not matters of anterior injustice," (pp. 216-217).

Although policies for promoting economic prosperity in African American communities may overlap with education initiatives, it is not usually the case that K-12 teachers and administrators endeavor to change public or economic policy. Rather, school reform is usually at the curricular level (e.g. No Child Left Behind) and imposed by state or federal authorities. However, radical efforts to restore the agency of African American students, foster their confidence, pique their curiosity, and ultimately raise their achievement occurred in Oakland, California in 1996. The implications of those inchoate efforts to close the Black-White achievement gap resonate to this day.

The Oakland School Board's Innovative Attempt to Close the Achievement Gap

In the mid-1990s, the Oakland Unified School District assembled a task force to brainstorm solutions to the abysmal academic performance of its African American students. At the time, the mean grade point average for African American students was 1.80 (C-); nearly 20% of African American twelfth grade students did not graduate that year, and the 1994 scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that for Oakland (and the rest of the country) African American students scored below their Caucasian peers at each grade interval assessed (Rickford & Rickford, 2000). Additionally, over 70% of Oakland's African American students were in special education courses (Smitherman, 1998; Rickford & Rickford, 2000).

In response to the recommendations of the task force, the Oakland School Board voted in favor of a proposal to close the Black-White achievement gap by teaching African American Vernacular English (AAVE) to students as a bridge to Standard American English (SAE). The Board reasoned that Ebonics (the combination of *ebony* and *phonics* to describe AAVE) was the natural language for most African Americans and that Ebonics was derived from African languages, thereby entitling its speakers to bilingual education funds (Baugh, 2000). According to Rickford and Rickford (2000), the resolution explains,

> Whereas the standardized tests and grade scores of African American students in reading and language art skills measuring their application of English skills are substantially below state and national norms and that such deficiencies will be remedied by application of a program featuring African Language Systems

> principles in instructing African American children both in their primary language and in English… (p. 168).

The Board also maintained that by training teachers to understand the linguistic structure of Ebonics and to celebrate the culture from which it springs, teachers would be able to provide African American students with validation of the language variety they speak at home, which the Task Force considered requisite for the acquisition of SAE (Baugh 2000; Rickford & Rickford, 2000). The resolution was greeted by negative reactions from African American leaders such as poet laureate Maya Angelou who stated, "I am incensed. The very idea that African American language is a language separate and apart can be very threatening" (CNN, 1996). Oprah Winfrey, Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Dr. Shelby Steele, in addition to prominent politicians across the political spectrum, including former Governor of New York, Mario Cuomo also expressed their disdain (Rickford & Rickford, 2000). Opponents of the resolution not only far outnumbered proponents, but also surpassed their counterparts in the vehemence with which they expressed their opinions. Linguistic evaluations of the Oakland School Board's resolution appeared in academic journals but were generally neglected by mainstream press (Smitherman, 1998; Rickford & Rickford, 2000).

Antipathy for the legitimation of Ebonics overshadowed discussion of the possible benefits of its strategic use with students struggling with literacy. Baugh (2000) reasons, "Many who criticized Ebonics […] scoffed at Ebonics as an attempt to legitimize "bad English" in the name of politically correct linguistic enlightenment. Detractors often claimed to be offended, resentful, or worse," (p.2). Indeed, critics asserted that AAVE was a bastardized form of English rather than another language, and

therefore bilingual education funds should not be diverted to African American students (Rickford & Rickford, 2000).

References to Ebonics as *slang* and *street language* flooded the airways and front pages of America's newspapers. Ronkin and Karn (1999) conducted a study of *mock Ebonics,* a term they coined to refer to the approximated form of Ebonics produced (usually for the purpose of ridicule) by people who are not familiar enough with the grammar and systematicity of AAVE to reproduce its forms accurately. Ronkin and Karn (1999) note, "by using a set of hyper-salient markers to represent a language system and its valuation, Ebonics parody pages produce a racialized language stereotype," (p. 373). The researchers conclude that during nationwide discussion of whether the purposeful use of Ebonics in Oakland schools would be appropriate, "attitudes toward Ebonics served as a safe proxy for a discourse on the threats that racialized groups pose to dominant group power in the United States" (p. 374). Thus, mock Ebonics was not harmless wordplay amid the turmoil over the Oakland School Board's resolution. Rather, mock Ebonics, similar to much of the backlash to the resolution, was racially-charged vituperation. The abundance of satirical cartoons, mockery, and criticism expressed by detractors of the resolution amounted to the categorical rejection of AAVE as part of an academic reform effort (Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Ronkin & Karn, 1999). Ultimately, the Board revised the proposal by calling for increased teacher sensitivity to heritage cultures and increased awareness of Ebonics as a form of Black speech. However, the real teeth of the proposal had been plucked to appease the indignation of the public.

Demotion, Remediation, and Stigmatization for AAVE Speakers

African American linguist Geneva Smitherman responded to the 1996 Ebonics controversy by reflecting on her days as a young student. She recalls that during elementary school she could only communicate in Ebonics; she was demoted to a lower grade for her inability to communicate in SAE (Smitherman, 1998). After the demotion, she adopted silence as the best approach to navigating school; however, this decision did not benefit her in higher education. She writes, "this strategy failed me when, as a university student, I had to take a speech test. Because I had not yet developed oral code-switching skills, I flunked the speech test and was forced into speech therapy" (Smitherman, 1998, p. 139). Smitherman (1998) uses the term *code-switching* to refer to the ability to alternate fluently between one language or dialect and another; she considers Ebonics a language variety distinguishable from SAE. Accordingly, she notes that the speech therapist was bewildered by the fact that none of the African American recipients of her therapy had been diagnosed with speech disorders and did not show any indication of neurological conditions that affect speech (Smitherman, 1998). Rather, the African American recipients of speech therapy were simply unable to transition out of Ebonics and into SAE—particularly in their pronunciation. So, the therapist taught Smitherman and her African American peers how to pronounce words in a traditional midwestern style of SAE. Smitherman (1998) reports that after a few months of pronunciation training, all of them passed the speech test. She counts herself as one of the fortunate few African Americans who learned that the secret to achievement in most of America's educational institutions revolves around mastery of SAE (Day-Vines et al., 2009; Smitherman, 1998).

Smitherman (1998) likens herself to the African American students who attend school in Oakland, California. She opines that the linguistic conundrum facing African American students today is all too familiar. She notes, "language is the major factor in the failure of Ebonics-speaking students. Much of the public debate and media (mis)coverage of the Oakland resolution completely missed the beat" (Smitherman, 1998, p. 140).

The Reasons to Classify AAVE as a Language Rather than a Dialect

The Ebonics controversy pivoted on whether Ebonics should be classified as a language in its own right or a dialect of Standard American English. To consider Ebonics its own language would mean to sever it from the notion of its inferiority as a substandard form of SAE (Smitherman, 2004). However, because language is a socially-constructed phenomenon (Gee, 2014; Kirkland & Jackson, 2009; New London Group, 1996), it not only serves the prosaic function of human communication, but also contributes to the reinforcement of social hierarchy. Smitherman (2004) maintains,

> In the minds of the lay public, languages have high status, dialects do not. A given language can easily be seen to be legitimately different from another language, whereas dialects are viewed as mere corruptions of or departures from a given language (Smitherman, 2004, p. 192).

The Oakland School Board argued for the classification of AAVE as a language derived from African roots which therefore necessitated the commitment of bilingual resources to ensure that African American students could code-switch between Ebonics and SAE (Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman 2004). Several features of Ebonics distinguish it from SAE. Ebonics has a way of relaying habitual or intermittent

iterativity, but SAE does not (Baugh, 1999; Rickford, 1999; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 1998). Smitherman (1998) writes, “As in the case of Efik and other Niger-Congo languages, Ebonics has an aspectual verb system [which can] denote iterativity” (p. 141). SAE regards the copula form as necessary, but Ebonics does not (Baugh, 1999; Rickford, 1999; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 1998). Smitherman (1998) explains, “like such West African languages as Twi and Yoruba, the use of a copulative verb is not obligatory in most contexts” (1998, p. 141). The parallels between Ebonics and West African languages can also be found in the use of inflection, deletion of consonantal endings, signification, and pragmatic use such as playin’ the dozens (Baugh, 1999; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 1998). Because AAVE contains African-inspired features and distinctive pronunciation, educators must take into account the linguistic challenges AAVE speaking-students face in the classroom where SAE is central to academic success (Day-Vines et al., 2009; Smitherman, 2004).

Geneva Smitherman was one of several linguists who testified in the 1979 case *Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School Children et al. v. Ann Arbor School District*, in which the single mothers of several African American schoolchildren who were speakers of AAVE sued the school district for not providing their children with adequate education. Compelling testimony in favor of the plaintiffs included that of William Labov, University of Pennsylvania professor and premier linguist in the field of AAVE who argued "Standard English [for these students] should be taught as a foreign language" (Yellin, 1980, p. 151, as cited in Horak, 1979). Daniel Fader, Professor of English at the University of Michigan and author of *Hooked on Books*, J.L. Dillard, author of *Black English*, as well as renowned Georgetown University linguist Roger

Shuy, argued for the consideration of AAVE as a factor in not only the academic performance of the African American students suing the Ann Arbor School District, but also the stigmatization they received in the forms of teacher exasperation and demotion to remedial classrooms (Yellin, 1980). Presiding Judge Charles W. Joiner acknowledged that the Ann Arbor School District needed to do more to ensure that teachers equipped student speakers of AAVE with literacy and academic skills. Although he stopped short of ordering that AAVE be taught in the schools as a springboard to SAE, Judge Joiner included the following reasoning in his order,

> There is no evidence that any of the teachers have in any way intentionally caused psychological barriers to learning […] But the evidence does clearly establish that unless those instructing in reading recognize (1) the existence of a home language used by the children in their own community for much of their non-school communications, and (2) that this home language may be a cause of the superficial difficulties in speaking standard English, great harm will be done. The child may withdraw or may act out frustrations and may not learn to read. A language barrier develops when teachers, in helping the child to switch from the home ("black English") language to standard English, refuse to admit the existence of a language that is the acceptable way of talking in his local community.

The *Martin Luther King Jr. et al. v. Ann Arbor School District* (1979) case predates the Oakland School Board's resolution by 20 years; however, during that interval, neither educational practice nor public discourse showed improved attitude toward AAVE and its speakers (Smitherman, 2004).

More than two decades have elapsed since the 1996 Oakland controversy. The remedy for the chronic underperformance of Black youth, most of whom are AAVE speakers, remains undiscovered. (Smitherman (1977) estimates that over 80% of African Americans are comfortable communicating in AAVE). The linguistic solution proposed by the Oakland School Board has been relegated to the annals of sensational news of a bygone era. However, it is no less true than it was 20 years ago that educators and administrators must apprise themselves of the dialectal features of AAVE in order to more effectively validate, teach, guide, and understand the AAVE-speaking students in their communities (Day-Vines et al., 2009; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 2004).

Operationalizing Literacy

Linguistically speaking, African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Standard American English (SAE) are equal. Both are rule governed; both are acquired by native speakers in early childhood when an individual first struggles to utter language; both mark identity within a community of speakers. Politics of race and class have contributed to the determination that SAE is the "standard" variety of English and that AAVE is nonstandard. Indeed, those who wield the wealth in society most often determine which variety of a language engenders prestige and access to resources. Hernández-Campoy and Pansoda (2009) assert that "there develops the association of the standard with the idea of correct, adequate, and aesthetic, on the one hand, and, of the nonstandard with that of incorrect, inadequate, and even unaesthetic, on the other" (pp. 181-182). Likewise, the reputation of any linguistic form is deeply entangled in the perception of its speakers. Just as the standard form is associated with correctness and

aesthetic morality, so the nonstandard is associated with incorrectness and aesthetic immorality.

Because AAVE is spoken by most African Americans (Smitherman, 1977), and because the stigmatized status of AAVE in society is inextricable from the status of its speakers, this dissertation project recognized the need to begin a consideration of language usage with the acknowledgment of rudimentary principles of linguistics. Noam Chomsky (1967), a luminary in the field of linguistics, asserts that human beings, with few exceptions, are born with an innate predisposition for language learning. Children, regardless of race, ethnicity, economic status, or home language, are equally inclined by their own biology to garner oral language in its full grammatical splendor as early as five years old and merely by verbal interaction in the home environment (Chomsky, 1967). The Grammar of a language, which native speakers acquire in early childhood, pertains to its pronunciation (phonetics and phonology), patterns of word formation (morphology), word sequencing (syntax), vocabulary (lexicon), definitional word meaning (semantics) and social usage (pragmatics). Native speakers learn language unconsciously, and it is an integral aspect of their identity (Chomsky, 1967; Rickford & Rickford 2000). The linguistic validity of AAVE, its prevalence in Black communities, as well as its stigmatized status in American society, necessitate an acknowledgement that any discussion of the literacy perspectives and patterns of African American males must take into consideration that their orientation to language may have begun with the usage of AAVE in their homes and their schools. So too may they have developed an awareness of the relegation of AAVE to the status of nonstandard.

Further, the appraisal of students' literacy in schools, jails, and other public institutions, is often based merely on a single standard or "correct" form of a national language assessed through reading and writing. According to the New London Group (1996), comprised of James Paul Gee, a prominent linguist, Norman Fairclough, a social theorist, Martin Nakata, a researcher on the literacy of indigenous communities (of Australia), Bill Cope, Mary Kalantzis, and several other specialists in fields ranging from semiotics to feminist theory, the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students complicate the ways in which literacy can be defined, taught, and assessed.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that in the very same year that the nation was embroiled in the Oakland controversy over Ebonics, the New London Group was publishing "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures" in the Harvard Educational Review. The New London Group (1996) asserts, "Literacy pedagogy has traditionally meant teaching and learning to read and write in page-bound, official, standard forms of the national language. Literacy pedagogy, in other words, has been a carefully restricted project" (pp. 60-61). The NLG (1996) maintains that the implacability of traditional literacy pedagogy disadvantages students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in addition to students who express their literacy more capably in visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multi-modal patterns of meaning. The ten contributors to the NLG state that they chose the term *multiliteracies* to emphasize that one correct form of language does not exist, rather that literacy is instantiated in the "multiplicity of communications channels and media" (p. 63) as well as in the "increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity (p. 63)." The authors maintain that the term they coined (*multiliteracies*) does not undermine, but rather augments and expands the

narrowly-defined traditional idea of literacy which recognizes only the correctness (and rectitude) of SAE and views reading and writing as the only legitimate expressions of literacy knowledge. The NLG authors emphasize that old-fashioned ideas of literacy remain embedded in the nation's schools,

> what we might term "mere literacy" remains centered on language only, and usually on a singular national form of language at that, which is conceived as a stable system based on rules such as mastering sound-letter correspondence. This is based on the assumption that we can discern and describe correct usage. Such a view of language will characteristically translate into a more or less authoritarian kind of pedagogy (p. 64).

The NLG (1996) authors remonstrate against this authoritarian pedagogy (and subsequent) practices of language teaching in the classroom. Thus, they maintain that literacy a) includes standard and non-standard varieties of language, dialects and creoles, b) is bounded to the social situation as it is experienced by the speaker, c) acknowledges the speaker's worldview and associated dynamics of power (class, race, gender, etc.) between speakers, d) is expressed in multiple ways informed by our anatomy (gestures) as well as available technologies, and e) can be explicitly deconstructed through the use of a shared metalanguage.

In addition to the linguistic precepts and anti-authoritarian ideals in the NLG framework, this dissertation project also enjoys consideration of the work of William Labov and Joshua Waletzky (1967) who co-developed a framework for understanding oral narration arising from their sociolinguistic analyses of AAVE. On his website as a linguistics professor at the University of Pennsylvania, Labov posts the following,

> The L&W framework developed for oral narratives of personal experience proved to be useful in approaching a wide variety of narrative situations and types, including oral memoirs, traditional folk tales, avant garde novels, therapeutic interviews and most importantly, the banal narratives of every-day life […]. It gradually appeared that narratives are privileged forms of discourse which play a central role in almost every conversation. Our efforts to define other speech events with comparable precision have shown us that narrative is the prototype, perhaps the only example of a well formed speech event with a beginning, a middle, and an end (para. 3).

The narrative framework developed by Labov and Waletzky (1967) arose from their interviews with Black people who described their everyday life experiences, their fears, their anxieties, and their plans. Thus, grandiose narratives told by performers on stage or by actors in front of a paying audience are far removed from the structure of the framework. Rather, the efforts of Labov and Waletzky (1967) concentrate on the linguistic habits of blue-collar folk engaged in natural, extemporaneous, and ordinary conversation. The African American male participants in this dissertation study who described their carceral and literacy experiences, cast the bulk of the data they provided into narrative form. Thus, the author finds it appropriate to consider both the narrative framework of Labov and Waletzky (1967) and the NLG (1996) conceptualization of literacy in the analyses of the interview data.

This dissertation project recognized that an abiding relationship exists between language, literacy, collective linguistic bias, school discipline, and juvenile delinquency. The disquietingly low scholastic achievement and high drop-out rates of African

American youth are compounded by the School-to-Prison Pipeline. Thus, the prison industrial complex and all its concomitant ills have a foothold in public schools, and African American males are the most at risk (Alexander, 2012; Henning, 2017). The misinterpretation of AAVE by teachers as indicative of student linguistic, if not cognitive deficit (Smitherman, 1998), the hyper-surveillance and over-policing of African American male youth by law enforcement inside and outside of school buildings (Henning, 2017), abundant public discourse about the innateness of Black criminality (Muhammad, 2010; Henning, 2017), and the systematic state-backed deprivation of funding to the neediest public institutions serving segregated African American youth (Kozol, 1991), cacophonously necessitate the simple question: how can educators ensure the intellectual, emotional, and academic success of African American male youth, particularly those who are speakers of AAVE and have experienced incarceration as juveniles and therefore grapple with compounded stigmatization? Although a host of variables contribute to the academic outcomes of African American schoolchildren, this project prioritized the role of literacy as it is intimately known by previously incarcerated African American young men in the prime of their lives.

Often, educators and politicians speak and are not understood because their language is not attuned to the concrete situation of the people they address. Accordingly, their talk is just alienated and alienating rhetoric. —Paulo Freire

CHAPTER TWO: LITERTURE REVIEW

The voices of African American male youth recently released from juvenile incarceration are seldom featured in education literature (Kirk & Sampson, 2013). Narratives of their carceral experience are difficult to attain because of the restrictions on research with participants who are minors and members of a vulnerable demographic. However, the absence of narratives of youth emerging from detainment is problematic. Indeed, for researchers, teachers, and policymakers who endeavor to improve socio-academic conditions of incarcerated juveniles, the dearth of first-hand information about the impact of institutional confinement on their lives represents a profound void. In addition, it produces a vacuum into which inordinate credence about the needs and well-being of detained Black children is given to adults who speak on their behalf. This dissertation project elicited and prioritized the lived experiences of African American young men between 18 and 30 years of age whose memories of detainment during childhood remain vibrant and effable. The research questions guiding the study included: (1) How do participants characterize the role of institutions—such as schools, correctional facilities, and halfway houses—in their formal and informal literacy development and usage? (2) How do participants interpret the role of literacy in their academic, economic, and social lives? (3) What does the narrative data of participants reveal about their formal and informal discourse patterns through the lens of the Multiliteracies framework? Particular attention was attributed to participant interpretation of the role of literacy prior, during, and after detention. The context for their narrative accounts necessitated perusal of multiple convergent themes in this

literature review including: 1) the historic denial of traditional literacy for African Americans, 2) the conflation of White speech with formal education in the psyche of Black youth, 3) zero-tolerance policies and the long reach of the prison industrial complex, 4) the delimitation of literacy expression in institutions, and 5) evidence of the literacy of incarcerated youth.

Historic Attempts to Deny Literacy to African Americans

Initial promotion of bible literacy.

When slaveowners began transporting Africans to Virginia in 1619, the laws regarding the education of slaves were malleable (Span & Anderson, 2005); chattel slavery was still in its infancy in America so the antipathy that characterized the literacy prohibition laws of the late 1700s and 1800s had not yet been codified. Norms among slaveowners (who regarded themselves as Christians) about whether they should aggressively convert their slaves to Christianity and teach them to read the Bible were still forming (Cornelius, 1983; Span & Anderson, 2005). For example, members of the Goose Creek Parish in South Carolina believed that slaves should be baptized and that they should read the Bible before baptism, so the parishioners opened a school in 1695 which ultimately provided reading instruction to thousands of slaves in South Carolina as well as neighboring states (Span & Anderson, 2005).

Bible literacy efforts occurred sporadically in the South; however, religion did not motivate all instances of reading instruction for black slaves (Cornelius, 1983; Douglass, 1845). It was not uncommon for slaves to receive rudimentary reading lessons under the tutelage of White women and their young school-going children of the household (Cornelius, 1983; Douglass, 1845; O'Neale, 1986). In some cases, White families

thought it was endearing or amusing to teach Black children how to read; in other cases, White families inadvertently educated slaves by mere circumstance such as permitting them in the room when White children were reading aloud or completing homework. According to Cornelius (1983), "Often teaching was casual and depended upon the slave's proximity to the house or to white playmates or upon the whims of owners" (p. 178). Very rarely did slaves learn how to read and write with fluency.

Publication of verse by black authors.

In the interval of almost 200 years spanning the 1600s to the late 1700s, only two slaves of African heritage were able to publish books of verse—Phillis Wheatley and Jupiter Hammon. Both poets wrote about the spiritual enlightenment that Christianity afforded them, and both were slaves in Northern states—Boston and New York, respectively (O'Neale, 1986). Because Whites determined which materials could be published and because they purchased the books that were sold, the challenges Hammon and Wheatley encountered were formidable. Not only did they need the permission of their White slaveholders, but they also needed to tailor their material to the palate of a White audience. Although during Hammon and Wheatley's time, their works were celebrated by Blacks as proof of the brilliance, industry, and humanity of all Blacks, recent literary criticism of Wheatley in particular, is tinged with disdain for veneration of Christianity and ostensible assimilationism (Levernier, 1981; O'Neale, 1986). The poem for which Wheatley is most popular *On Being Brought from Africa to America* is oft-cited by her detractors as proof of her denigration of African identity;

Twas mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land,

Taught my benighted soul to understand

That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too:

Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.

Some view our sable race with scornful eye,

"Their colour is a diabolic die."

Remember, *Christians*, *Negros*, black as *Cain*,

May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

While the poem may ostensibly corroborate the view that Wheatley internalized the supposed superiority of Christianity over religions of Africa, and of White skin over Black, the four latter lines of the poem indicate otherwise (Levernier, 1981; O'Neale, 1986). According to Levernier (1981), "Wheatley meekly asserts that hers is in actuality a 'sable race.' Far from negative in its connotation, this image evokes suggestions of nobility and natural dignity" (pp. 25-26). For Wheatley, who lived from 1753-1784, protest against the injustices of slavery necessitated clandestine means (O'Neale, 1986). However, this apparently innocuous poem provoked the incredulity of Whites who did not readily believe that an African slave in her teenage years could possibly have composed it (Gates, 2003). Wheatley's slaveowner, John Wheatley, publicly vouched for her and ultimately facilitated a trial in which eighteen White men, including John Hancock and Andrew Oliver (prominent statesmen of Massachusetts) convened to determine the authenticity of her works (Gates, 2003). Over a year after the informal trial, in which her authorship was confirmed, Wheatley's collection of poems was published primarily through the efforts of John Wheatley. However, Wheatley's accomplishment as the first-published female African poet in America did not herald a thriving acknowledgement of the birthright of literacy for African Americans in the

United States thereafter. Rather, the small percentage of slaves who did acquire rudimentary reading and writing ability were not permitted the time, materials, and tutelage to advance—such resources were intentionally withheld by slaveowners (Cornelius, 1983; Douglass, 1845).

Laws close the loopholes in literacy instruction of blacks.

Laws began to emerge in the South prohibiting the literacy instruction of Black slaves by the late 1700s (Cornelius, 1983; Span & Anderson, 2005). The laws were established to prevent slaves from writing their own manumission papers, delimit their exploration of the Bible, and curtail the requisite words and analytic skills for independent thought (Cornelius, 1983; Douglass, 1845; Span & Anderson, 2005). Slaves who ardently desired to practice their fledging literacy skills, risked their lives when they secretly removed books from the homes and schools of Whites. So too did they risk their lives when reading after being told by slaveowners that it was prohibited. In his narrative account to Fisk University interviewers, W.E. Northcross, an ex-slave, recounts the difficulty he faced in reading at night by the fires he lit himself in a far corner of his captor's property,

> I would shut the doors, put one end of a board into the fire, and proceed to study; but whenever I heard the dogs barking I would throw my book under the bed and peep and listen to see what was up. If no one was near I would crawl under the bed, get my book, come out, lie flat on my stomach, and proceed to study until the dogs would again disturb me (Cornelius, 1983, p. 181).

By the early-1800s, in which it is estimated that 10% of African Americans in the Antebellum South were literate (Bly, 2017), laws to stymie the spread of literacy were in full effect. Virginia was among the first state to codify severe penalties for activities that

could lead to literacy or its facilitation. In large part, the laws were in reaction to a rebellion conceived by a slave in Richmond, Virginia named Gabriel (sometimes referred to with the last name Prosser) to kill slaveowners and burn their property to the ground. In 1800, Gabriel's plans were uncovered before they could be realized, and more than 30 slaves were hung or sold out of state (Bly, 2017). During the trial subsequent to the discovery of Gabriel's plot, testimony revealed that he and several co-conspirators were literate and traveled from plantation to plantation writing their own passes and stirring aspirations of freedom among slaves (Bly, 2017). Lawmakers hoped that by preventing slaves from meeting in large groups, they could deter literacy and sentiments of insurrection before their nascence (Bly, 2017; Goodell, 1853). Accordingly, the congregating of Blacks-whether slave or free of full or mixed blood—at any home or institution for the purpose of spreading literacy, was against the law (Bly, 2017; Goodell, 1853). The codes encouraged corporal punishment of up to 20 lashes for the infraction of attempting to acquire literacy (Goodell, 1853).

Virginia laws were representative of most southern states in the 1800s; such legal measures not only stipulated punitive action toward slaves, but also specified fines and imprisonment for slave owners who endeavored to teach slaves to read or write (Bly, 2017; Goodell, 1853). Goodell (1853) provides a scathing critique,

> We have found no laws that even professed to guard the highest interests of slaves as human beings, family sanctities, female chastity, education, religious development. No restraints upon the violation and destruction of these are attempted to be thrown around the slave-master. But, on the other hand, he is restrained, as has been shown, from […] bestowing upon his slave an education

> that would increase his usefulness, or of employing him to do any kind of writing. The slave may be "used" so as to be "used up" in seven years-may be used as a "breeder," as a prostitute, as a concubine, as a pimp, as a tapster, as an attendant at the gaming-table, as a subject of medical and surgical experiments for the benefit of science; and the Legislature makes no objections against it! But he may not be used as a clerk. In all this, the master's absolute right of ownership is restrained (pp. 303-304).

David Walker's Call for Insurrection and its Response

Indeed, the issue of whether slaves had the right to learn how to read reached its pinnacle shortly after the publication of *An Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* in 1829, written in passionate prose by an African American man born into freedom. Walker (1829) adamantly demanded that Blacks fight against the tyrannies of slavery, and that this fight must be physical, spiritual, and intellectual. Accordingly, Walker (1829) asserted that an integral aspect of resistance must be the development of advanced literacy and love for language among Blacks. He contended that if literacy and physical rebellion occurred hand in hand, it would not be at his provocation, but merely a consequence of the sustained egregious abuse of his people. Walker (1829) warned, "The whites want slaves, and want us for their slaves, but some of them will curse the day they ever saw us. As true as the sun ever shone in its meridian splendor, my colour will root some of them out of the very face of the earth" (p.25). Further, Walker (1829) encouraged his Black readers to follow the leadership of the men among them who called for armed insurrection. Walker (1829) assured them that such men embodied the righteousness and strategic acumen of Toussaint L'Ouverture, who spearheaded the

revolution that won Haitian independence by 1800. It is probable that Nat Turner, who was also born free, read Walker's Appeal. After all, Turner claimed that he was elected by God to sanctify the freedom of southern Black slaves with the spilled blood of their unsuspecting slaveowners. Turner's insurrection in Southampton, Virginia led to the death of almost 60 Whites, some of whom slept in their beds during the morning of the attack in August of 1831 (Bly, 2017).

As a well-read and literate man, Turner fostered contact with slaves through spoken and written correspondence. He also disseminated written plans about the uprising. Because Turner's rebellion involved his ability to read, write, and facilitate the distribution of information about the rebellion and ultimate deaths of White people, the South designed and implemented harsh laws for the protection of White families. However, the legislated obstruction of the intellectual health of Black people coupled with their purposeful physiological degradation, pivoted ethical men and women toward resistance. Moreover, the violence-tinged righteousness Gabriel, Walker, Turner and others, alongside the mild-mannered consciousness prodding of abolitionists—Black and White—fanned the Civil War.

Twentieth Century Expectations for Black Literacy

At the heart of America's Civil War, waged from 1861 to 1865, was the question of whether the humanity of African Americans would be legally recognized and protected in the United States (Baldwin, 1963). Although President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, during the very midst of the war, to declare the freedom of slaves, it was not until the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution on December 6, 1865, that chattel slavery was legally prohibited.

Accordingly, the 13th Amendment asserts, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction" (Cornell Law, 1992). Despite the caveat responsible for the creation of the prison industrial complex of today (Alexander, 2012), the 13th Amendment marked definitive progress for Black Americans. African Americans emerged from the Civil War invigorated and enthusiastic about the prospect of full participation in American life, and prioritized education as a means to upward mobility (Cross, 2003). Scholars of the Twentieth Century such as W.E.B. Dubois poignantly articulated the sentiments of African Americans of their era "reflecting a yearning for (a) schools for themselves and their children and (b) standards of personal excellence that would transform them from illiterate adults and children into valued and productive people" (Cross, 2003, p. 73). Despite the egregious physical and psychological violence that had been perpetrated upon them, the collective efforts of African Americans toward education and prosperity were positive (Blackmon, 2008; Cornelius, 1983; Cross, 2003; Span & Anderson, 2005). The challenges that African Americans faced throughout the Twentieth Century in pursuit of the American dream were erected by those in power who did not want to grant the pathways for the productivity of former slaves in American life (Blackmon, 2008; Cross, 2003).

The Coupling of Demonstrable Literacy with Access to Civil Rights

By 1870, The United States had passed the 13th Amendment guaranteeing freedom from enslavement, the 14th Amendment prohibiting the truncation of rights conferred to American citizens, and the 15th Amendment specifying in part that, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United

States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude" (Cornell Law, 1992). However, the South scrambled to find innovative ways to circumvent the Constitution and the progressive trajectory manifest during Reconstruction. One such Southern effort was the requirement of literacy tests during voter registration for those who could not prove attainment of more than an elementary education. The Supreme Court repeatedly upheld the use of literacy tests until Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The enactment of public policies and laws that penalized African Americans for not being able to satisfactorily demonstrate literacy to bigoted White political stakeholders, no doubt contributed to the ever-burgeoning entanglement of literacy in the efforts to deny fundamental citizenship rights to African Americans.

African American youth of today are the grandchildren of those who celebrated the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the implied promise of access to the riches of greater America. However, recent comparisons between the status of African Americans in 1968 and 2018, show that African Americans have not made the progress much anticipated 50 years ago (Jones, Schmitt, & Wilson, 2018). In 1968, President Johnson received a report from the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders that detailed the educational attainment, health, employment, income, and incarceration rates of African Americans. Jones, Schmitt, and Wilson (2018) of the Economic Policy Institute, compared those historic findings with present-day statistics, and their overall evaluation is that, "with respect to homeownership, unemployment, and incarceration, America has failed to deliver any progress for African Americans over the last five decades. In these areas, their situation has either failed to improve relative to Whites or has worsened" (p.

1). In the sphere of education, the results are better. In 1968, just over 54% of African Americans earned a high school diploma compared to approximately 92% of African Americans in 2018 (Jones, Schmitt, & Wilson, 2018). College graduation rates have almost doubled; roughly 9% of African Americans graduated from college in 1968, yet almost 23% earned college degrees in 2018 (Jones, Schmitt, & Wilson, 2018).

Thus, according to the Economic Policy Institute's (2018) analysis, despite the fact that African Americans have become increasingly educated, the disparity between Black and White home ownership, employment, and incarceration rates has persisted. The ostensible progress in school of African Americans, but lack of improvement (and even decline) in the other spheres, begs the question: to what benefit in the life of African Americans is secondary and tertiary education if it is not leaving a calculatable positive impact on home ownership, employment, and incarceration rates? African American adolescents surely arrive at this question. They certainly also consider what it means to be Black and educated in a world that seemingly withholds its rewards and accolades from most Black people and confers them instead on those who embody or claim Whiteness (Baldwin, 1963; Coates, 2015; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Indeed, African American youth, as they acquire race consciousness, necessarily strive to reconcile miasmic race narratives, daunting evidence of Black incarceration and unemployment, and constructions of Blackness and Whiteness, with a statistical uptick in Black graduation rates and their own aspirations for the future.

Conflation of White Speech with Formal Education

Whiteness provides the parameters for that which is normal, traditional, and sensical in American society. It is an aesthetic that excludes the possibility of the

presence of the *other*. Whiteness exemplifies sanity and order. But Whiteness is also a construction which has been imposed and levied in ways that are beneficial only to those who claim it (Baldwin, 1963, Coates, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). According to Toni Morrison, Whiteness has been central to the literary imagination; she (1993) posits,

> For some time now I have been thinking about the validity or vulnerability of a certain set of assumptions conventionally accepted among literary historians and critics and circulated as "knowledge." This knowledge holds that traditional, canonical American literature is free of, uninformed, and unshaped by the four-hundred-year-old presence of, first Africans and then African-Americans in the United States. It assumes that this presence-which shaped the body politic, the Constitution, and the entire history of the culture-has had no significant place or consequence in the origin and
>
> development of that culture's literature. Moreover, such knowledge assumes that the characteristics of our national literature emanate from a particular "Americanness" that is separate from and unaccountable to this presence (pp. 4-5).

American Whiteness—fallaciously peddled as a static property of identity distinguishable from the *other*—which Morrison delineates as an implacable feature of literature instruction in schools, is the same construct that permeates the teaching of other disciplines as well, including history, geography, philosophy, and the sciences (Baldwin, 1963, Coates, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Emergent from the espousal of Whiteness as normative and central to American education, is the rejection of traits that have been associated with Whiteness by African American youth. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) posit,

> This problem arose partly because white Americans traditionally refused to acknowledge that black Americans are capable of intellectual achievement, and partly because black Americans subsequently began to doubt their own intellectual ability, began to define academic success as white people's prerogative, and began to discourage their peers, perhaps unconsciously, from emulating white people in academic striving, i.e., from "acting white" (p. 176).

According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), African American children attending public schools experience the encroachment of Whiteness (as it has been touted) on their identity as an ever-present threat such that successful participation in American school life is nothing less than capitulation to the preservation of Whiteness. Further Fordham and Ogbu (1986) assert that Whiteness can be performed in many ways including: speaking Standard English, earning high grades, enjoying poetry, visiting museums and hiking. To "act white," particularly in middle school and high school can be considered by students as tantamount to complicity with those who seek to obliterate or deny "blackness" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, & Chavous, 1998; Steele & Aronson, 1995). The "oppositional identities" which develop in Black students as they encounter racial discrimination and/or imagine the impact it will have on their lives, is an inevitable rite of passage (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) and provides partial explanation for why African American students who enjoy relatively comfortable socioeconomic status, still perform academically on par with African American students of low SES.

Prudence Carter (2016) argues that the sociocultural contexts of school exert much more influence on student attitudes than any preconceptions about what constitutes White or Black identity that students initially bring to school with them. Indeed, according to Carter (2016), schools establish structures that both 1) enforce involuntary student racial segregation inside of classrooms, and 2) encourage voluntary student racial segregation outside of classrooms. One such institutional routine that Carter (2016) considers problematic is the placement of Caucasian students into the courses earmarked for "smart" students and the placement of African American students into relatively low-track or remedial courses. Carter (2016) writes,

> Tracking has begun to be referred to as a form of resegregation because it has evolved into an educational practice that frequently excludes and stratifies on the basis of perceived ability by these social identity categories. Further, from a researcher's perspective, I have seen that the social organization of students within classes and racially demarcated extracurricular activities reinforces the establishment of de facto ethnically and racially segregated spaces (p. 148).

Carter (2016) espies from her field study in public schools of differing demographics, that the racial composition of school sports teams (e.g. basketball and baseball) and cafeteria seating demonstrate student self-segregation. However, she interprets these in-group-out-group preferences to be a mere outcropping of policies that schools implement (e.g. tracking) that designate norms and expectations related to race; Carter (2016) also points to the exclusion of Black students in trips abroad to Asia and Europe which are often coordinated by school leadership. Thus, within Carter's (2016) view, the theory that Black students academically sabotage themselves by refusing to "act White" or "talk

White" does not acknowledge the complex interplay between school structures and student agency.

However, if the responsibility for the academic engagement and social incorporation of African American students rests, partially, on the shoulders of teachers and administrators, then they must evaluate the constructions of Whiteness and Blackness reflected in the school structures they utilize. Unfortunately, the sentiment borne out in the tracking, disciplinary practices, and discourse in public schools suggests that the stance currently adopted by many teachers and administrators is the acceptance (whether unwitting or deliberate) of the stereotype that African American students are inarticulate, academically-challenged, and unappreciative of fine arts and foreign cultures (Delpit, 1995).

Racialized Discourse in Schools

School are microcosmic; they mirror the disparities, predispositions, and prejudices of the larger society in policy as well as discourse (Delpit, 1995; Henning, 2017; Ngo, 2010; Noguera, 2003). According to Ngo (2010), discourses can be defined as, "a set of historically grounded, yet dynamic statements and images that have the power to legitimate and create knowledges, identities, and realities […] discourses are never neutral but imbued with and reflect political positions, values, and social practices" (pp. 9-10). When students grapple with identity, they contend with discourses that circulate within their school and home communities (Henning, 2017; Ngo, 2010; Noguera, 2003), and such discourses are inextricably tied to power relations (Foucault, 1977).

Urban schools, which are responsible for educating en masse African American and Latino students, are often described as war zones or jungles (Ngo, 2010). According to the discourse, verbal and physical violence is waged in the hallways and classrooms, students are out of control, and teachers feel under attack (Ngo, 2010). Media representations of urban schools such as *Lean on Me*, *Dangerous Minds* and *The Freedom Writers,* reinforce the prevailing discourse (Ngo, 2010) in tandem with television programs such as *Cops* and the nightly news which parade image upon image of African American and Latino youth in trouble with the law (Henning, 2017). According to Winn, Behizadeh, Duncan, Fine, and Gadsden (2011), "This means that teachers who watch the news and see young people of color constantly represented as violent lawless criminals may internalize this image and have lower expectations for their students of color" (p. 153). Teachers may also adopt the discourse when they describe their own experiences in urban schools. In a study conducted by Ngo (2010), a teacher recalling her first year at an urban high school, lamented, "I just didn't know what to do […] it was kind of a zoo" (p. 25). The same teacher later refers to the students as *war babies* and adds "They're damaged you know. So many of them, I think, just have had so much damage done to them" (p. 40).

Frequently the prevailing discourse depicts the homes of African American students as degenerate and intellectually impoverished. Accordingly, the discourse asserts that students are raised in a "culture of poverty" in which parental unemployment, substance abuse, food instability, and the lack of consistent role models impedes their ability to flourish (Delpit, 1995; Henning, 2017; Ngo, 2010; Noguera, 2003). Examples of this mentality abound. Delpit (1995) quotes the teacher of a three-year-old African

American boy as saying "He's probably never allowed to talk at home. He needs communicative experience [….] I don't think he even knows what family means. Some of these kids don't know who their cousins are and who brothers and sisters are" (p. xxii). Similarly, Ngo (2010) quotes one of the teachers in her study of an urban high school as saying, "the school is in many senses probably the most consistent thing in many of these kids' lives" (p. 47). In this predominant narrative, African American family life is destructive; parents are unable to provide basic material and emotional support, and debilitating pathologies afflict children and adults alike (Delpit, 1995; Henning, 2017; Ngo, 2010; Noguera, 2003).

In accordance with the dominant discourse, successful students of color are praised as exemplars; they overcome the odds to achieve academic excellence—in spite of their identities and circumstances (Ngo, 2010; Noguera, 2008); they are portrayed as the rare students who champion the human capacity to endure. These discourses are familiar and trite; the varsity basketball player who is lionized one day and feared the next (Noguera, 2008); they are the "war babies" and "comeback kids" (Ngo, 2010, p. 52).

The identity-making process of students of color, particularly African American students in public schools, is fraught with hazards (Carter, 2016). African American students must negotiate the destructive discourses about their intellectual and socio-academic potential that frame interactions with teachers and administrators (Delpit, 1995; Henning, 2017; Ngo, 2010; Noguera, 2003). Additionally, African American students may have difficulty discerning and withstanding the racially-charged contexts of school in which academic, social, and behavioral norms are reified along racial lines in explicit and subtle ways (Carter, 2016).

To the education researcher examining the reasons for the pervasive achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students and the worthwhileness of integrationist education, Carter (2016) cautions, "the research must be vigilant about the social and symbolic boundaries embedded in school contexts that can privilege certain groups and marginalize others" (p. 160).

Zero-Tolerance Policies and the Prison Industrial Complex

The connectedness of discourse to labeling, tracking and discipline.

Schools sort, socialize, and socially control students; these processes collectively influence the academic (and economic) trajectory of each student (Clark, 2004; Fine, 1991; Singer, 2009). Those who are perceived by teachers and administrators as demonstrating the ability to succeed are tracked toward more challenging coursework and opportunities that will prepare them for high paying jobs that require expertise (Carter, 2016; Clark, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Fine, 1991; Noguera, 2003; Singer, 2009). Integral to teacher perception of students' academic potential is language usage (Day-Vines et al., 2009; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 1998). Students who dexterously speak Standard American English (SAE) and conform to the linguistic and concomitant ideological pressures of school, will win the confidence of their teachers much more readily than those who communicate in alternative forms such as African American Vernacular English (Day-Vines et al., 2009; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 1998).

Conversely, students who are perceived by teachers and administrators as having limited socio-academic potential (often partially determined because of lack of SAE proficiency) are channeled away from sophisticated coursework and onto a path that will

lead to low paying jobs, manual labor, and prison (Delpit, 1995; Henning, 2017; Noguera, 2003). Students usually submit to the sorting process because continuous evaluation and feedback contribute to the students' perception that their ability has determined relative rank (Henning, 2017; Noguera, 2003). When students resist the sorting, socialization, and social control enacted in schools—their resistance is typically marked by misbehavior (Noguera, 2003). "Most often it is the students who understand that school is not working for them, and who know that education will not lead to admission to college or access to a promising career, who typically cause the most trouble and disturbance in school" (Noguera, 2003, p. 344).

Discourse practices are inextricable from disciplinary policies and the manufacture of at-risk status of students in public schools (Bowditch, 1993; Fine, 1991; Noguera, 2008). Characteristics of students who are often categorized by schools as "at risk" of academic failure—such as poverty, truancy, and poor academic performance—are often the same attributes of students who are labeled "troublemakers" by teachers and administrators (Bowditch, 1993; Fine, 1991; Noguera, 2008). Thus, the disciplinary consequences of being a "troublemaker" are identical to those incurred by being "at risk." This parallelism is problematic, particularly at a time when public schools are espousing the implementation of policies that mitigate factors that place students at risk.

One of the most well-known advocates for politically-correct terminology in reference to students who incur disciplinary measures and who are usually categorized "at-risk" is Michelle Fine. Nearly three decades ago, Fine (1991) popularized the term "push outs" to refer to students who abandon school as a result of assertive school disciplinary policies. The term gained appeal among some researchers because it marked

a shift in the discourse. Whereas traditionally correlations between family structure, socioeconomic status, and high school graduation had been explored to explain why students leave school before completing it, Fine (1991) and others encouraged an investigation of discourse and procedures instituted in schools that promote student disenchantment and pre-graduation departure. For most students who leave school voluntarily or as a result of the imposition of sanctions by administrators or law enforcement, the trajectory begins in kindergarten and is buttressed by anachronistic and novel punitive measures ranging from corporal punishment to school-based arrests. These measures are disproportionately used with students of color and students with cognitive challenges.

Corporal punishment in schools.

Corporal punishment is still routinely practiced in 15 of the states in which it remains legal; most of which are in the South, with Mississippi and Alabama at the forefront (Clark, 2017). The total amount of students, with and without disabilities, who endured corporal punishment during the 2006-2007 academic year was 223,190 (Han, 2011); more recent data indicate a decline in the use of corporal punishment to just under 110,000 students during the 2013-2014 academic year (Sparks & Harwin, 2016). Proponents of corporal punishment maintain that it is an inexpensive way to manage students, and that it is most successfully implemented in school districts in which family and school culture agree that physical punishment is acceptable (Clark, 2017; Han, 2011; Sparks & Harwin, 2016). However, opponents of corporal punishment in schools argue that studies have not proven physical discipline to be effective; rather, that such policies inflict physiological harm on children and should be replaced by behavioral intervention

and counseling services (Han, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2008). Additionally, opponents of corporal punishment assert that students who watch while the discipline is meted out to others but do not personally receive it, still suffer the psychological effects of seeing someone else endure the infliction of pain (Han, 2011).

The two most determinant factors of whether students are physically disciplined include (1) principal perception of the student population and (2) availability of resources that present an alternative to corporal punishment (Han, 2011). In schools that serve predominately African American, Latino, and special education students, principals perceive high levels of disorder and therefore resort more quickly to the use of corporal punishment to control the student population (Han, 2011; Sparks & Harwin, 2016). Therefore, students are more likely to receive corporal punishment if they attend schools wherein a large proportion of students are members of an ethnic minority or have special education status. Although use of corporal punishment has lost popularity in public schools (Clark, 2017; Sparks & Harwin, 2016), Black students are disciplined at twice the rate of White students, and corporal punishment is considered a component of the School-to-Prison Pipeline (Sparks & Harwin, 2016). Corporal punishment, when considered alongside zero-tolerance policies, paves the way for criminalization of schoolchildren, particularly those of marginalized status.

New norms of discipline in schools.

Although urban schools have long been arenas for gang-related violence, the prominence of shootings at public suburban schools in relatively middle-income neighborhoods contributed to the call for policies that foster safety in schools. The Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 stipulated that federal funding be withheld from any public

schools in which a student who brought a weapon to school was not expelled and referred to law enforcement (Cerrone, 1999). Further, the act encouraged each state to develop security measures, such as the installation of cameras and metal detectors, to decrease the likelihood of violence in schools (Wolf, 2013). After the 1999 massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, in which Eric Harris, 18, and Dylan Klebold, 17, killed a dozen students and a teacher before shooting themselves, policies regarding the monitoring and discipline of schoolchildren became even more widespread and entrenched (Addington, 2009; Altheide, 2009). The federal government, alongside a traumatized American public, insisted that cases of violence and threats of violence in schools be handled in ways that increasingly mirrored the criminal justice system (Addington, 2009; Altheide, 2009; Hardy & Laszloffy, 2005; Wolf, 2013). Police officers were stationed inside of public middle and high schools throughout the country, and developmentally-appropriate behaviors exhibited by adolescents, (e.g. fistfights and yelling) became associated with criminality (Lesko, 2001; Wolf, 2013). Thus, the discretion formerly used by schoolteachers and administrators to determine whether youth have committed infractions that necessitate arrest and/or incarceration is complicated by the emergent public agenda and aggressive zero tolerance policies (Lesko, 2001; Wolf, 2013).

Currently, possession of illicit materials such as drugs, drug paraphernalia, weapons, and weapon-like objects can lead to student expulsion and criminal prosecution in the juvenile justice system. Similarly, student behavior that is interpreted by school personnel or Student Resource Officers (SROs) as threatening, aggressive, or disruptive, can result in disciplinary consequences (Henning, 2017). Opponents of zero-tolerance

decry its role in criminalizing children and obligating teachers to disciplinary measures that they may find excessive (Henning, 2017; Hirschfield, 2008; Wolf, 2013). Opponents also point to the role of teacher bias in the meting out of discipline and the consequent vast disparities in the percentages of African American males and special education students who face suspension, expulsion, and school-related arrest at alarmingly disproportionate rates (Hirschfield, 2008; Vavrus & Cole, 2002; Wacquant, 2001; Wolf, 2013).

The ostensible role of the 14,000 to 20,000 SROs currently employed in the nation's schools is to ensure that they are safe places to learn (National Association of School Resource Officers, 2018); however, the actual role of SROs in schools can differ based on student population. Interestingly, Thurau and Wald (2009) interviewed school police chiefs and SROs in sixteen Massachusetts school districts throughout the 2008-2009 academic year. The researchers discovered that schools relied on officers in disparate ways. Schools with few resources for counseling and mental health services, but with a student population of low socio-economic status (with as much as half of the students supervised by state agencies) called on SROs to enact consistently harsh punishment on its student population. Conversely, schools with resources for counseling and behavior modification programs used SROs with less frequency and in a capacity that resembled coaching. Thurau and Wald (2009) also found that officers perceived their role in schools as either crime fighting or youth counseling. An officer who exemplified the former view was quoted as saying, "We are there to keep order when the principal won't" (p. 990). He and like-minded officers who viewed arrests as their primary contribution to the school, indicated an unwillingness to participate in training

geared toward child development and behavior. However, officers who viewed themselves as counselors demonstrated a willingness to take courses and participate in training that could better familiarize them with the development of the pubescent psyche. An officer who clearly articulated this opinion reflected, "if the children have a problem, the SRO should be able to direct it to the right counseling people […] He should be a friend first and an officer second" (p. 990). The police chiefs and SROs interviewed for the study conducted by Thurau and Wald (2009), explained that most officers who work in schools are considered amiable by their peers and have children in their own homes. However, criteria such as personality types and the presence of children in their own homes is not enough to prepare SROs for responding to minor incidents of childish misbehavior (Henning, 2017; Thurau & Wald, 2009).

In 2014, the assistant principal of a school in Kenton County, Kentucky deemed it necessary to request the help of Deputy Sheriff Kevin Sumner in the capacity of SRO, to calm down an eight-year-old boy with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder who had been disruptive in class. Sumner handcuffed the special education student on his biceps; the boy cried out that it hurt and wept apologetically in the chair he was required to sit in for a stipulated amount of time (Mizner, 2017). The American Civil Liberties Union took the case to court, and on October 11, 2017, Federal District Court Judge William O. Bertelsman ruled that Sumner's actions were unconstitutional (Mizner, 2017). The ruling is considered among the first to challenge the rights of police in schools (Mizner, 2017); much more progress is needed. Currently, only 12 states require SROs to receive training on how to interact with youth in schools (Sneed, 2015) and consistency of training

regarding child development, cognition, behavior, and socio-emotional needs is nonexistent (Keierleber, 2015).

School Resource Officers, teachers, and administrators often have the opportunity to exercise discretion regarding the decision to discipline youth in school or formally charge them with crimes when the infraction is of low severity such as disorderly conduct—which can amount to talking in class while the teacher is talking. Proponents of processing juveniles who commit petty offenses assert that contact with the penal system has the effect of deterring juveniles from more serious criminal activity in the future (Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, & Guckenburg, 2010). Opponents maintain that it labels youth as criminals, stigmatizes them, and inclines them toward increased criminality (Henning, 2017; Noguera, 2003; Petrosino et al., 2010). When youth are formally processed, they are handcuffed, read their Miranda Rights, fingerprinted, and photographed. If they do not make bail, they are required to wear state-issued penitentiary clothes. They are assigned a number and a bunk. They are spoken to and regarded as delinquent by officers of the law. In this way, juvenile inmates are more than merely stigmatized through language and attitude; their bodies also endure stigmatization. Although youth may emerge from processing in a few days or even a couple of hours, the effect of the experience may remain indelible (Henning, 2017). Such experiences can also erode respect for the law and the willingness to recognize the authority vested in officers of the law as rightfully placed (Henning, 2017). The deterioration of student confidence in law enforcement can also be accompanied by a sense of bewilderment and disenchantment with school such that interaction with SROs or with the juvenile justice system erodes student motivation to learn and to achieve.

Further complicating SRO discretionary patterns and the lack of federally-mandated SRO training for service in schools is the fact that the students most at-risk for suspension, expulsion, and/or incarceration are minorities, males, low academic achievers, students with learning disabilities, and children of foster care, homelessness and/or low socio-economic status (Giroux, 2003; Henning, 2017; Hirschfield, 2008; Keierleber, 2015; Noguera, 2003; Vavrus & Cole, 2002; Wacquant, 2001). Thus, students with the most barriers to success are the ones most likely to experience punitive consequences for behavioral and/or cognitive non-conformity (Singer, 2009; Wald & Losen, 2003).

The Implications of Traditional Literacy for Incarcerated and Recently-Released Youth

The claim of correlation between literacy and intelligence.

In 2007, Maryanne Wolf, a Harvard-educated professor of child development at Tufts University, was widely acclaimed for the publication of her book, *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain.* Wolf (2007) posits that the neuronal development and circuitry of the brain of an individual who can read and write is distinctly different from the brain of an individual who cannot. She supports her claim with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) research as well as through linguistic and historical evidence. Ultimately, Wolf (2007) argues that literacy correlates with the ability to think in complex ways. She writes, "The new circuits and pathways that the brain fashions in order to read become the foundation for being able to think in different, innovative ways" (p. 218). If increased neuronal activity in various regions of the brain associated with reading and writing, aptitude for styles of thinking, and familiarity with

accessing the abstract correlate with literacy as Wolf (2007) posits, what are the implications for youth who do not acquire functional literacy?

Degraded literacy opportunities for students of color.

Literacy, traditionally defined as the ability to read and write, is associated with better health (UNESCO, 2006), higher paying employment, as well as the ability to make informed life choices (Morrell, 2008). When individuals can read and write critically, they can comprehend the claims made in texts, draw inferences, synthesize and evaluate content, and extrapolate meaning relevant to their lives (Morrell, 2008); they can utilize critical literacy skills in transformative ways that empower them to recognize and disrupt hegemonic discourses and policies (Freire & Macedo, 1987), and they are more likely to attend college (Winn et al., 2011). However, African American and Latino students, particularly those in urban public schools, experience an emphasis on surveillance and discipline that curtails the development of nurturing, intellectually stimulating environments most conducive to fostering critical literacy (Polakow, 2000; Winn et al., 2011). Indeed, the degraded opportunities for development of critical literacy are exacerbated by the prevalence of special education coursework, suspensions, expulsions, and zero-tolerance policies that contribute to the School-to-Prison Pipeline (Lipman, 2008). So too does literacy in the language arts classroom and across the curriculum privilege native speakers of Standard American English (Day-Vines et al., 2009; Rickford & Rickford, 2000) who espouse or acquiesce to a worldview shaped by values of White America (Coates, 2015; Delpit, 1995; Morrison, 1993). The conceptualization of literacy as a decontextualized and apolitical skill has been disproved (Heath, 1983; Dyson, 1993; Ong, 1982); however, despite more inclusive

definitions of literacy that recognize the cultural and linguistic contributors to literacy practices (Gee, 2008; New London Group, 1996), literacy teaching and assessment still mirrors previous monolithic constructs (Greene, 2008).

Students who receive an education while incarcerated experience an institutional emphasis on control of their behavior which supersedes concern for their literacy status (Ayers, 1997; Foley & Gao, 2002). Indeed, the opportunity to equip incarcerated students with requisite treatment and literacy skills critical to socio-academic success in addition to future gainful employment is often lost (Leone & Cutting, 2004). Leone and Weinberg (2012) nod to the Census Bureau data from 2007 and 2008 on median income earned by individuals based on degree attainment. Expectedly, the median income for individuals who do not attain a high school diploma is lowest--$19,000 a year; however, it is $8,000 higher for those who graduate from high school. Individuals with a Bachelor's degree earn a median income of $47,000. For the incarcerated juvenile who completes neither high school nor college, the loss in potential salary is over $30,000 a year. The devastating financial impact of non-completion of secondary and tertiary education by juvenile offenders is but one consequence correlated with the carceral experience.

The Tension Between Discipline and Literacy in Carceral Settings

The majority of incarcerated and formerly-incarcerated individuals are African American and Latino (Sickmund, 2004; Poe-Yamagata & Jones, 2000). Characteristic of adults and juveniles alike within the penal system is an inability to read well. In adult populations, some jurisdictions have inmate populations with illiteracy rates as high as 70 percent, (Drakeford, 2002). Although researchers have not been able to untangle the interplay of causative factors, they have noted the link between incarceration and

functional illiteracy. Also noted is the decreased recidivism rates of formerly-incarcerated individuals who are able to read at or above grade level (Leone et al, 2005; Gottfredson, 1995; Maguin & Loeber, 1996).

Oft-cited as foundational to discussions on the reading ability of detained youth, are the results of the 1978 study, Project READ, conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Project READ investigated the reading ability of juvenile inmates of about 15 years of age in a national sample. Most of the students, though they were ninth graders, were not able to read beyond a fourth-grade level; perhaps more alarmingly, one third of them read below grade level (Krezmien & Mulcahy, 2008). Current data on the reading achievement of juvenile inmates reveal little progress (Foley, 2001; Lavigne & Rybroek, 2014).

William Drakeford (2002) investigated the effects of a reading remediation program on six detained African American male adolescents at the Oak Hill Correctional Facility, in Laurel, Maryland. Student participants, most of whom were 17 years of age, had received a reading score at or below the 25th percentile on standardized tests and had attended special education classes prior to the study. Drakeford (2002) and three undergraduate special education students from the University of Maryland—all Caucasian females—used the Corrective Reading program in their remediation work with the detained youth. According to Drakeford (2002) CR emphasizes decoding and comprehension skills imperative to reading progress. Drakeford (2002) and his team administered pre-tests before beginning the CR program which met three times a week for an hour over a duration of 8 weeks. Post-tests were administered at the conclusion of the program. Pre and post-tests also measured attitude toward reading through the

Rhody-Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment (RSRA). Drakeford (2002) maintains that he used a single subject research strategy in which each participant's reading performance and attitudes were evaluated individually and not in cumulative terms. Thus, although some specific information is provided regarding how many words per minute each student read correctly in the last sessions of the program, the overall results to Drakeford's (2002) indicated some benefits to the program, as noted thus,

> In addition to positive results for reading fluency, findings demonstrated that corrective reading technique improved student placement levels and attitude toward reading. By the end of the study, most participants expressed interest in returning to school, finding employment, reading independently, and possibly obtaining a General Education Development Certificate (p. 142-143).

Drakeford (2002) identifies several limitations to the study, most of which he attributes to the environment. He asserts that although he gained the permission of the Superintendent of the facility to conduct the study, and distributed and retrieved parental consent for the participants, correctional officers impeded data collection in several ways. According to Drakeford (2002) officers would bring students to the session up to 30 minutes after it had begun, thereby causing interruption of the class and acclimation difficulty for the tardy students. In addition, Drakeford (2002) posits that officers would occasionally fail to provide sufficient safety for the undergraduate students on the research team. Classroom spaces were not adequately monitored: other youth inmates who had heard about the program would enter the classroom in order to receive reading remediation and would subsequently incur discipline for their violations of facility rules. Drakeford (2002) contends that as more studies are conducted within the juvenile detention setting,

researchers must inveigh against pervasive institutional negativity and indifference regarding literacy instruction. Accordingly, "this will require a shift in institutional culture. Key determinants of an organizational culture, values, behaviors, and incentives as they relate to education must change if literacy initiatives are to succeed" (Drakeford, 2002, p.143).

Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are the skills traditionally associated with literacy. Researchers of incarcerated youth and adults point to lack of literacy development as a major factor contributing to non-completion of high school, crime, and high recidivism rates (Drakeford, 2002; Leone et al, 2005; Gottfredson, 1995; Maguin & Loeber, 1996). Although the low reading ability of detained juveniles has garnered attention from sociologists and special educators, few studies have considered the oral language ability of this population.

Oral Language Studies of Incarcerated and At-Risk Youth

Davis, Sanger, & Morris-Friehe (1991) investigated the oral language skills of detained youth in comparison to their non-incarcerated peers. Participants included 48 Caucasian males; 24 of the youth were incarcerated and the remaining 24 attended public high school. Groups were matched on age (a mean of 16.6 years) and Full Scale Intelligence Quotients (FSIQ)—which were between 90 and 109. None of the youth were categorized as having a learning disability. Researchers conducted two forms of testing: the Clinical Discourse Analysis for spoken language and the Test of Adolescent Language-2 (TOAL-2). Speech-language pathology graduate students conducted the tests. The discourse analysis test was considered informal and consisted of approximately 15 minutes of elicited student speech pertaining to a favorite movie or

book. The student speech was recorded and transcribed for analysis of fluency. The TOAL-2, included 8 standardized subtests—two of which pertained to oral language. The results suggested that incarcerated youth have less oral language fluency than their non-detained peers. According to Davis et al. (1991), "The delinquent youth performed significantly below their non-delinquent peers on both the informal language sample, which evaluated language in a more functional, descriptive context, and the comprehensive standardized measure (TOAL-2)" (p. 260). Further, "The mean number of total errors for the delinquent youth was almost twice that of the non-delinquent group" (p.260).

Davis et al. (1991) employed the use of linguist Paul Grice's Cooperative Principle in organizing the transcribed student speech and determining what constituted errors in the informal language sample. According to the Cooperative Principle, discourse participants cooperate by adhering to a tacit set of maxims during conversation (Fasold, 2006). These maxims include quality (truthfulness), quantity (amount of words), relation (relevance), and manner (clarity). Davis et al. (1991) considered the most frequent errors of incarcerated youth to be in quantity and manner. Errors in manner included false starts, repetitions, non-specific vocabulary, and mispronunciations. Davis et al. (1991) write, "These findings suggest that speech-language pathologists as well as other special educators need to continue to advocate for early identification of language problems and critique the types of assessment procedures and treatment alternatives they use in working with delinquent populations," (p. 262). The authors found that 38% of participants qualified for speech and language services. Further, Davis et al. (1991) lament that the incarcerated youth who participated in the study were not identified as

having speech-language difficulty and were not diagnosed as needing special services by their schools so that they could have received early intervention.

In a study designed to replicate research by Davis et al. (1991), Sanger, Hux & Belau (1997) compared the oral language use of Caucasian females. Twenty-eight of the participants were incarcerated juveniles, and 28 attended public high school. Youth were matched on age and IQ. Researchers evaluated elicited streams of speech for pragmatic and grammatical accuracy. Sanger et al. (1997) discovered that no significant differences existed in the pragmatic oral fluency of the two groups; however, detained youth had a much higher percentage of morpho-syntactic errors than their non-detained peers. Although not diagnosed prior to the study as requiring speech and language intervention, Sanger et. al. (1997) identified 14% as requiring such services.

In addition to research that strongly suggests incarcerated youth have inadequate reading and speaking ability, previous studies have also found that incarcerated youth have lower Full Scale Intelligent Quotient scores than their non-detained peers. Accordingly, incarcerated students consistently demonstrate IQ scores ranging from 80 to 100 (Foley, 2001). Although all student participants in the cited studies by Davis et al. (1991) and Sanger et al. (1997) had IQ scores up to 109—which is average—none of the detained youth demonstrated higher than normal IQ. The literacy ability and IQ scores of juvenile inmates is an important facet of the discussion regarding the intellectual welfare of this population. The reverence with which teachers, administrators, correctional officers, and parents regard IQ and literacy—as it is traditionally defined—can consequentially result in stigmatization, labeling, low expectations, and intellectual maltreatment of at-risk, detained, and recently-released youth.

The majority of youth who reside in detention centers demonstrate low levels of proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking according to standardized test scores and current qualitative measurements of literacy; nevertheless, in the detention setting, control over behavior of juvenile inmates supersedes concern of their literacy status (Foley & Gao, 2002). Students who misbehave, suffer consequences such as confinement to private quarters for protracted periods of time and forced absence from the classroom. Public schools and correctional facilities often fail to coordinate education services for incarcerated students (Meisel et al., 1998). Inmates with disabilities may never be acknowledged for having them; Individual Education Programs (IEPs) rarely find their way into the juvenile penal system (Leone et al, 2005). Classwork is more often worksheets and rudimentary skills reinforcement rather than more substantive material (Coffey & Gemignani, 1994).

Jeffers (2010), an African American scholar who was incarcerated as a young adult but successfully earned advanced degrees after confinement, examined the education of six young African American men as the topic of his dissertation. Jeffers (2010) conducted qualitative interviews with participants (ages 18-24) about their K-12 years in California's urban schools in order to ascertain the schools' role in the identity development and life choices of these African American male students. Jeffers (2010) opens his dissertation with a perusal of standardized test scores published by the National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) from 2000 to 2005 in mathematics and writing. Jeffers (2010) argues that the chasm in test performance between Black and White students highlights the challenges urban schools pose to the healthy psychoeducation development of African American children. He remarks that schools

must foster positive ethnic identity among students and this identity must "counteract centuries of racism directed toward African Americans that stereotyped them as being cognitively inferior" (p. 14).

Jeffers (2010) cites examples of controversial publications such as *The Bell Curve* by Hernstein and Murray (1994) in which the authors claim that intelligence is correlated with class and genetics such that African Americans (especially those of lower SES) have less cognitive ability than their Caucasian counterparts. Jeffers (2010) considers claims akin to those in *The Bell Curve* to insidiously and substantially harm the expectations that both students and teachers bring to the classroom regarding the cognitive potential of Black students. Jeffers (2010) writes, "Hernstein and Murray's work engages in 'academic terrorism' [….] The use of statistics, such as scores from IQ tests and other standardized achievement exams, to try to demonstrate the inferiority of African Americans has a long history" (p. 19). Jeffers (2010) posits that the widely-circulated and racially-charged, albeit erroneous, claims in *The Bell Curve* and publications of similar ilk constitute an assault on the collective psyche of the African American community and send the message to teachers that their African American students are of low intelligence.

After conducting two 40-minute interviews with each participant and one group interview for his research study, Jeffers (2010) interprets the interview responses to demonstrate that African American males enjoyed their early elementary years and had genuine emotional connections to their teachers. Jeffers (2010) writes, "Overall, the participants recalled more about K-4 schooling and had more positive things to say about that academic period than any other period. Unfortunately, these examples of early

positive academic experiences did not develop and continue over time" (p. 130). Indeed, Jeffers' (2010) next section is titled "Middle School Meltdowns" and the data he presents are characterized by participant accounts of feeling startled by the sudden academic expectations of middle school for which elementary school did not prepare them, long periods of classroom time in which they were bored, in addition to a marked shift in the treatment they received from teachers who were nurturing caregivers in the K-4 classrooms but strict disciplinarians in grades 5-8. Jeffers' (2010) participants expressed that by high school they were disenchanted with academe and much more interested in sports, girls, illicit substances, and money. He concludes that "the participants' high school experiences point to a collective failure in the educational system to teach African American males the benefits of education in terms of advancing their academic and career goals," (p. 143). As an ex-offender who acknowledges that he identifies with his study participants, Jeffers (2010) maintains throughout his dissertation that California's urban public schools are insufficiently funded, staffed with under-qualified teachers, and incapable of fostering a continuously supportive learning environment for African American male students who search for the relevance of schools to their lives. Although Jeffers' (2010) study is useful for pointing out the academic decline of Black students as they matriculate from elementary to middle to high school, Jeffers (2010) does not undertake an examination of the role of juvenile jails in the identity formation of his study participants.

Polly (2013), also an African American male scholar, conducted a phenomenological investigation of the effect of zero-tolerance policies on six African American men. Polly (2013) prefaced the discussion of his research with the challenges

that he faced growing up in an impoverished single-parent household as the second oldest of six children. As he reflects on his stance as a researcher, he notes that his own brothers are incarcerated or disenfranchised (p. 16); he is the sole male survivor of the social and educational hardships his family experienced. He confides that he did not become a criminal himself because he was not savvy at criminal activity. Polly (2013) also hearkens to Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS), as defined by Joy Degruy-Leary in reference to intergenerational trauma and pervasive lack of confidence experienced by African Americans as inheritors of the remnants of slavery and its associated poverty, disenfranchisement, and oppression (p. 10). According to Polly (2013) PTSS is especially problematic because it debilitates those whom it afflicts with a sense of foreboding and despair.

Ultimately, in his qualitative study of African American males and the impact of school on their identity development, Polly (2013) found that the School-to-Prison Pipeline (STPP) is not a conduit through which students are directly channeled from school into prisons. Rather, he remarks that the pipeline is indirect; the time away from school conferred to African American male students perceived by their teachers as misbehaving, contributes to idleness that leads to trouble. Polly (2013) writes, "From the stories of these students it seems as if the overall

culture of school, with the help of zero tolerance policies, limited what they saw as possible for themselves," (p. 112). Polly's (2013) research suggests that school culture and policy can contribute to the likelihood that youth will lose interest in school, disregard its reputed value, and choose instead to succumb to forms of behavior that will lead them to prison.

Longitudinal Studies of the Overall Well-Being of Supervised Youth

William Ayers (1997) provides an extensive and multifaceted examination of the status of incarcerated youth who are facing sentencing for major crimes. Ayers' book (1997) emerges from a year that he spent tutoring students in reading and writing at the Audy Home—a school site within Chicago's Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center. Ayers (1997) divides his text into chapters; one highlights the experiences of a long-time teacher in the institution; another considers the founding and mission of the Audy Home itself; several chapters feature students who attend the school as they await sentencing. Ayers (1997) reflects on the roles of teachers, lawyers, media images, and society's perception of appropriate punishment as prominent themes in his discussion of incarcerated youth. However, what is perhaps most unique about Ayers' (1997) text is his rendering of the voices and lives of the adolescents who fill the classrooms of the Audy Home; Ayers (1997) provides long and uninterrupted dialogue between students and their teachers, notes, poems and letters penned by students, and a sobering interpretation of the various discourses produced by and surrounding incarcerated juveniles.

Ayers' (1997) work is ethnographic and could easily be categorized as case study research. He observes, documents, and analyzes spoken and written texts; he deliberates on the contexts from which these texts arise; and he assembles a collage of juvenile incarceration. Ayers' (1997) characterizes his study accordingly,

> This book chronicles my immersion in the detention center school, my odyssey through Juvenile Court, my encounters with tough kids in tight spots. It is, as well, an invitation to join me in that immersion in the life-world of the detention

> center, which, like every other culture, hangs together on shared meanings, on agreed upon expressions, on assigned ways to participate, on accommodation and harmony and assent. (p. xvii-xviii).

Ayers (1997) admits early and frequently in his book that he is not impartial. His years of experience as a schoolteacher in Chicago's inner city, his perspective as a parent of three adolescent sons, and the influence of his wife—who founded the Children and Family Justice Center at Northwestern University—are all factors he credits with influencing work. Ayers (1997) openly displays his disappointment with the juvenile justice system. He asserts that the predicament of most detained youth is the result of inexorable social forces beyond their control. He espies vast disparities in the portrayal, evaluation, and sentencing of juveniles across socioeconomic, racial and gender lines.

Ayers' book reveals inmate experiences in the juvenile justice system with elaborate detail. For example, Ayers (1997) describes one of the sessions of English class. The students, primarily African American and Latino males in their mid-teens, are asked to read and discuss a few scenes from August Wilson's play *The Piano Lesson.* The teacher, Mr. B, a middle-aged African American male, permits students to make connections to their own lives while figuring out what the play means to them. After summarizing a scene, a student wonders aloud whether the three years the main character has been mourning her husband is too long. Antoine, another student, answers, "Three years is not too long if you love someone. You might mourn […] the rest of your life. It could be a good thing. It could be good for her" (p. 19). While detailing the student discourse, Ayers (1997) also portrays the emotional tenure of the talk, "Perhaps it is the seriousness with which Antoine asserts his position, or the fact

that he rarely speaks at all, and now he has spread words across several sentences, or some shared sense of grief or rage, but no one disagrees. Several students nod, some to themselves, others openly in his direction" (p. 19).

Ayers (1997) proceeds to describe how students clamor for roles to read aloud, and then how they read haltingly and laboriously but enjoy the encouragement and attention from the teacher. When the time allotted for *The Piano Lesson* is over, Ayers (1997) continues the session by asking students to write a small poem about themselves; he recounts several of the student poems in his book. The following is one of them, "My name is Merce/dark and tall/I love my freedom/I hate being locked up/I'm afraid of going back to the street and do what I was doing to get locked up/I wish I was out in the world and I hope for Mercy/Hall" (p.22).

Ayers laments that the merciful treatment so many of the youth ache for is elusive. He posits that no more than five percent of the youth in Audy Home will return to their homes. Rather, according to Ayers (1997), most of the detained juveniles will be sent to adult courts when they are of age and then swiftly sent to adult prisons to serve hard time. Such is certainly the outcome of trial for Jeff, one of the juveniles at Audy Home who committed murder when he was fourteen. Ayers (1997) testifies on Jeff's behalf during the trial. Ayers (1997) tells the courtroom that Jeff is shy and follows the rules; Jeff achieves in the classroom; he has potential. However, Ayers' (1997) testimony about Jeff's classroom behavior and possible future has little impact on the judge. Ayers (1997) recounts, "With that the judge sentences Jeff, not yet seventeen years old, convicted killer of a rival drug dealer, to forty-seven years in prison," (p. 10). Ayers is deeply moved by the outcome of the trial and the style of justice it portends for

other adolescents who act immorally, irrationally, and hastily in turbulent moments of their youth and then must endure a lifetime of compensation for their mistakes.

Ayers (1997) gains access to lawyers and judges who expound on their experiences as representatives of the juvenile justice system. On a morning in which Ayers (1997) conducts an observation in Juvenile Court, Judge Bloom officiates thirty cases before lunch break. A procession of handcuffed youth, exclusively African American and Latino males, stand in front of Judge Bloom to receive sentencing. Public defenders and prosecutors haggle openly for the ways in which justice should be dispensed. When the morning session closes, Judge Bloom confides to Ayers (1997) that he never aspired to become a judge in Juvenile Court and that he is tired of the cases over which he presides. According to Ayers (1997), "[Judge Bloom] tells me that his work is overwhelming; the number of cases he hears every day, every week, every month is grinding; court support and services are disturbingly inadequate; alternatives to incarceration are dwindling" (p. 30). Ayers (1997) provides snapshots of the judge in action; the reader is shown the drudgery and complexity of the judge's work and the exorbitant power of his decisions over the lives of detained juveniles.

Overall, Ayers' (1997) study is a form of activism. He endeavors to showcase the oft-concealed lives of incarcerated youth and the social structures that contribute to their status. Ayers (1997) does not offer solutions, but he attempts to awaken the consciousness of his readers. He emphasizes the victimization of incarcerated youth and depicts social forces as implacable and permanent.

Another scholar who provides extensive examination of the lives of detained youth of color, is Joby Gardner. In his 2010 article *Democracy's Orphans: Rights,*

Responsibility, and the Role of the State in the Lives of Incarcerated Youth, Gardner (2010) reflects on the preparedness of recently-released youth who are required, by the legal system and corresponding social structures, to function as adults upon reaching the age of twenty-one. Gardner (2010) asserts that for this population of youth, the challenge of accomplishing the tasks that constitute conventional passage into adulthood—admittance to college, relative financial independence, and mature decision-making ability – are further compounded by legal restrictions and stigmatization. He also laments that the services provided by the state, such as foster care, public high school, and rehabilitative youth counseling, are revoked as youth reach early adulthood.

Gardner (2010) amassed his data from four years of experience working with youth in detention and rehabilitative settings, respectively. His participants totaled 25 males between the ages of 15 and 21 of various racial groups of which African Americans, Latinos, and Polynesians were most prominently represented. Gardner (2010) conducted almost 90 one-on-one interviews and recorded over 2,500 minutes of group interviews. In addition, Gardner (2010) visited youth informally outside of the detention and rehabilitative centers. Gardner (2010) posits that he draws from Critical Discourse Analysis and literature on Democratic citizenship for his study. Gardner (2010), a college-educated Caucasian male, professes that his sincerity and ongoing commitment to the well-being of the youth with whom he works has permitted him a rich ethnographic perspective.

Nodding to the work of Michelle Fine and others who highlight the critical contribution of academic scholarship to the improvement of rights for vulnerable youth, Gardner (2010) certainly aligns himself with those who view detained and recently-

released youth as inheritors of a precarious form of Democracy. Gardner (2010) poetically writes, "Some argue these young people are democracy's bellwethers, akin to the metaphorical canary in the coalmine, sensitive to and predictive of worrisome retractions in the possibilities for democratic citizenship" (p. 85). Gardner (2010) maintains that the youth hesitate to perceive themselves as victims of a failed Democracy, particularly during a group counseling session. According to Gardner (2010) when youth are confronted with the option of accepting responsibility for their crimes by counselors in the presence of other youth, the typical response is acknowledgement of responsibility. Gardner (2010) attributes this ostensible maturity in reasoning to the unwillingness of (formerly) detained youth to accept the role of powerless/child/victim. Rather, such youth encourage their peers and counselors to perceive them as agents/actors within their own lives. However, when the counseling sessions are less public (one-on-one), youth often speak about their lives as much circumscribed and curtailed by external, societal factors. Gardner (2010) characterizes the latter narratives as evidence of the faltering status of the Democratic process. Gardner (2010) writes: "considered collectively, stories of growing up amidst insufficient protections and facing expanding responsibilities and contracting rights appear as critiques of democracy on the basis of its own underlying ideologies" (p. 90). Gardner (2010) raises the question of the safeguards that must necessarily be in place for all youth of this nation to be successful. He questions the power and promise of state-provisioned care and protections for vulnerable youth. Significantly, Gardner (2010) also delineates the consciousness of formerly-incarcerated youth as disheartened, disenchanted, ambivalent, and yet still clinging to the optimism so characteristic of their age.

Summary of the Study

The present study acknowledged the premises of Ayers' and Gardner's work which delineate incarcerated youth as Democracy's "bellwethers," and inheritors of a form of agency conflicted by the power of an implacable judiciary system. Additionally, the present study deeply considered the dehumanization and curtailment of citizenship involved in the denial of literacy to African Americans for hundreds of years in America. I aimed to invigorate current education literature with the authentic voices of African American young men between the ages of 18 and 30 who received a minimum of three months of their education behind bars in juvenile detention facilities. Unlike previous studies, my analysis included the legitimation of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and the forms of literacy vibrant in the lives of linguistically and culturally diverse populations. So too this analysis sought to understand how participants juggle traditional literacy skills—such as the ability to read and write—with more dynamic literacy efforts. The perceptions of literacy and patterns of language usage inherent in the narrative data of formerly-incarcerated African American young men between the ages of 18 and 30 will further inform and make representative the body of education literature about schooling in America. It is my hope that the lived experiences of this demographic will also provide critical information on how to improve literacy education for African American males in penal institutions and public school environments.

The oppressor is in solidarity with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice […] — when [the oppressor] stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love. –Paulo Freire

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of African American young men between the ages of 18 and 30 who were incarcerated for at least three months in the juvenile detention setting and who received their education in correctional facilities and other institutions (e.g. public schools, rehabilitation centers, and hospitals). The study explored participants' perceptions of their literacy practices in addition to their use of language during the qualitative interviews. The researcher presupposed that participant narratives would recount verbal and written interaction with teachers, counselors, police officers, nurses, and lawyers, and that these recollections would portray the range of educational experiences by African American schoolchildren, generally, and low-income African American boys, specifically, in the 21st Century.

Accordingly, the research questions examined in this study were:

(1) How do participants characterize the role of institutions—such as schools, correctional facilities, and halfway houses—in their formal and informal literacy development and usage?

(2) How do participants interpret the role of literacy in their academic, economic, and social lives?

(3) What does the narrative data of participants reveal about their formal and informal discourse patterns through the lens of the Multiliteracies framework?

Choice of Qualitative Methodology

It is crucial that African American male youth who were incarcerated while juveniles have the opportunity to reflect on their detention experiences and the education they received prior to, during, and after incarceration, in part, because their lived experiences can inform the body of literature available to teachers and policymakers who seek to improve the socio-academic conditions of students who navigate public institutions with their bodies, their spirits, and their intellects. Moreover, although studies have been conducted in carceral settings to measure the literacy or communicative proficiency of inmates (Davis, Sanger, & Morris-Friehe, 1991; Drakeford, 2002; Gottfredson, 1995; Leone et al, 2005; Maguin & Loeber, 1996), these studies fail to establish the premise that African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a legitimate and systematic form of English, albeit highly stigmatized. Few studies acknowledge the role of disciplinary policies and the School to Prison Pipeline in relegating schoolchildren to detention facilities for non-violent and age-appropriate behaviors that are now considered criminal offenses (Jeffers, 2010; Polly, 2013). Roughly a third of adjudicated youth spend six months or more in confinement (Feierman, Mordecai, & Schwartz, 2015; Mendel, 2015), and federal law grants juveniles the right to receive public education behind bars that is comparable to the education they would otherwise receive in their neighborhood middle and high schools (Black, 2005; Wolford, 2000). Therefore, the absence of research about the education of detained youth in general, and African

American male youth in particular, constitutes a gap in the research that my phenomenological study can begin to fill.

The richness of the data that surfaced from interviews with formerly-incarcerated African American young men ages 18 through 30 regarding their institutional education and literacy, lends itself most readily to qualitative methodology. Quantitative methods, which prioritize the role of variables, patterns, objectivity of the researcher, and random selection of participants, are not conducive for eliciting the nuance and depth of participant narratives; according to Yates and Leggett (2016), "Although quantitative analysis allows for a high degree of precision in research, it represents a 2-D view of findings as compared to the rich, deep descriptions offered by qualitative approaches," (p. 225). Accordingly, qualitative methods elicit the vocalization of participants' thoughts, whether raw or cogitated, in order to more accurately manifest the essence of the matter under investigation.

The Phenomenological Approach

Intrinsic to qualitative studies is the researcher's pursuit of that which is meaningful to participants as they express it through their own language and with their own metaphors, symbols, historical references, and contexts. The phenomenological approach intensifies the emphasis on how participants describe their lived experiences so that the researcher is able to identify and recreate its essence (Creswell, 2015). According to Patton (1990),

> The experiences of different people are bracketed, analyzed, and compared to the identity of the essences of the phenomenon, for example, the essence of loneliness, the essence of being a mother, the essence of being a participant in a

> particular program. The assumption of essence, like the ethnographer's assumption that culture exists and is important, becomes the defining characteristic of a purely phenomenological study (p. 70).

So too does the phenomenological researcher understand that while participants are the ones with the authority to speak authentically about their experiences, the researcher has responsibility for interpreting the imparted themes and storylines that reveal the core of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2015; Patton, 1990; Polly, 2013) especially when the phenomenon levies intense emotional demands on participants and stirs those feelings during the qualitative interviews (Merriam, 2009).

The phenomenological approach invited me to be deeply invested in the participants with whom I interacted. While the quantitative data on the achievement gap (Bohrnstedt et al., 2015; Vanneman et al., 2009) and disproportionate representation of African Americans in jails, prisons, and juvenile detention facilities (OJJDP, 2017; Rovner, 2014; Henning, 2017; Sickmund et al, 2017) have already apprised the American public of the challenges facing the Black community and the shortcomings of America's institutional structures, qualitative data offer the perspectives of those whose bodies, spirits, and minds endured carceral education while they were children. Consequently, their wisdom, their reflections, their pain, and their insight can inform the discourse on how to improve these institutions.

Ethical Considerations

The participants in this study were formerly-incarcerated African American young men between the ages of 18 and 30; thus, they experienced at least three tiers of vulnerability. First, prisoners, even when they are children, are outwardly stigmatized by

the accoutrements of incarceration. The physical privacy of prisoners is removed from them and the carceral regimen is imposed upon their bodies and their psyches (Foucault, 1977); they experience wearing handcuffs, shackles, and jumpsuits. They are subjected to institutional monitoring and institutional discipline. When released from confinement to re-enter society, the adjustment for ex-offenders can involve grappling with the legally-imposed stigma of incarceration in addition to internalized stigma—both of which can interfere with achievement in academe, the workforce, and social life. Secondly, African American males inherit a long and undisputed history of oppression in the United States of America, much of which is manufactured through institutional forces such as schools, jails, and hospitals. Thirdly, young adults are vulnerable by the mere fact that they are young. Physical maturation, reasoning ability, capacity for resilience, and moral character take time to develop and can be stymied by institutionalization. In the aggregate, participants in this study, because they were young (albeit no longer children), African American males, and ex-offenders, were particularly vulnerable when positioned as subjects of qualitative research. Risks to them included:

a. The triggering of intense emotional or psychological reaction to interview questions
b. The disclosure of information considered confidential or legally protected
c. The disclosure of self-incriminating information or information that incriminates others
d. The antagonistic interaction among the participants who share the status of former incarceration and may recognize one another while passing in hallways or on staircases.

I mitigated the above-mentioned risks by (a) ensuring that trained counselors and adults with whom participants had established trust were in or near the building; (b) apprising sponsor organizations before the scheduling of interviews and apprising participants during the process of obtaining informed consent that an integral aspect of the study was the discussion of carceral experiences and that unintentional or intentional disclosure of confidential information is necessarily protected by the use of pseudonyms, redaction, and omission; (c) cautioning participants not to share information that incriminates them or others because of my ethical obligation to report such information to law enforcement officials; (d) sequencing interviews with the community organizations such that ample time was apportioned between the departure of one interviewee and the arrival of the next.

Researcher Stance

My decision to elicit the narratives of formerly-incarcerated African American young men between the ages of 18 and 30 for an examination of their carceral education and literacy perspectives emerged from circumstances in my own life. With the continuous support of my parents, my siblings, and my spouse, I have raised three African American sons and one daughter to adulthood in the United States; they are attending colleges in the Northeast and are studying computer science, politics, culinary arts, and medicine, respectively. It was a long journey through childhood for each of them. From the time of their births, I steeped my children in literature and foreign languages. We lived in a comfortable home on half an acre of land in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., just one mile's distance from a well-stocked library. However, my oldest son is adopted; he joined the family when he was ten years old. When he arrived,

the only language variety with which he was acquainted was African American Vernacular English (AAVE), and his literacy skills were nascent. I noted, with deep concern, how the world narrowed for him in academe. Because he was already ten years old and a fifth grader at the time of his adoption, I decided to resign from my job as the Assistant Director of Advancement at an independent secular school in Washington, D.C. so that I could homeschool him. I withdrew my other children from the private schools they were attending in order to form a small class of the four children—my three sons and a daughter. As I worked concertedly with my adopted son to cultivate his familiarity with Standard American English (SAE), I realized that I had my own linguistic preferences and prejudices. Incidentally, the same year of his arrival, 2004, I began attending Georgetown University's graduate program in Applied Linguistics. Thus, while I was studying foundational theories about the arbitrariness, systematicity, and equality of all forms of language in class, I was also learning of the challenges and affordances of being a monolingual, brown-skinned AAVE speaker from my adopted son.

Further, my father, who worked as a journalist for an alternative media company that required community service of its employees, invited me to meet his students in a spoken word program at a local juvenile detention facility. I shadowed my father and his co-instructor while they conducted workshops with African American male inmates who relished the emphasis on oral language, poetry, and performance. Although some of the teenage inmates were not functionally literate, the instructional style used by my father and co-teacher catalyzed student self-expression and engagement. I developed a bond with the detained youth during my experiences in the juvenile detention facility between

2010 and 2011, first as an observer, and then as a volunteer instructor of linguistics. Their boisterousness, vulnerability, and wit often reminded me of my own three sons at home. Long after my volunteer work at the detention facility concluded in 2011, I wondered what happened to the incarcerated juveniles I had met. I wondered whether they had completed high school and made plans for college. I wondered how they interpreted their carceral education.

While raising my children and considering the plight of youth in juvenile detention facilities, I was also deeply affected by the news reports of the senseless murders of African American boys. In 2012, when Trayvon Martin was fatally shot in a gated community while walking to his father's house with an Arizona drink and a bag of skittles, my own sons were 13, 16, and 18 years old. I remember how my heart ached when George Zimmerman was acquitted. As the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter became popular (and controversial), I questioned how I could contribute to improving the climate of justice in this country and whether writing a dissertation on the carceral education of juveniles was a worthwhile project while the blood of Black and Brown-skinned schoolboys was saturating the concrete. Ultimately, as I read the newspaper with my children and tried to make sense of the institutional and social convergence of century-old patterns of racism in this country, I reconciled my anger, my indignation, and my concern with a renewed dedication to my research on the lived experiences of African American young men who had been incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities.

Social Constructivism

My approach to this phenomenological study was necessarily social constructivist. Social constructivism maintains that reality is constructed by the

individual who experiences it; the researcher, therefore, is an "outsider" who elicits the truth as it is understood by the research participant (Clark, 2010). Truth is constituted by a farrago of attitudes, intentions, beliefs, and schemas of the individual interviewed—the expression of which facilitates the researcher's "understanding" (Strega, 2005). The social constructivist approach to qualitative research complements phenomenology because it compels the researcher to understand the essence of a phenomenon, as it is conceptualized by individuals participating in the research. Although ultimately the researcher has the responsibility of re-presenting this truth, and therefore acts in the capacity of a co-constructor of truth—the researcher endeavors to follow the lead of the participants.

I relied upon Paulo Freire's *Pedagogies of the Oppressed,* Critical Race Theory, and the New London Group's Multiliteracies Framework to provide a lens through which to more clearly understand this study's interview data and its myriad sociopolitical, economic, and pedagogical implications. I established from the outset that I consider the multitude of African American schoolboys to be under systematic institutional assault, and that accordingly, they constitute the oppressed within the landscape of current public education policies—particularly in the inner cities. Educators and policy makers, albeit unwittingly, have the choice of two roles and no more—either as oppressors or as liberators (Freire, 1972) of the African American students they instruct. The prevailing sentiment that African American male youth are troublemakers overlaps with frequent incidences of discipline doled out by educators (Delpit, 1995; Fine, 1991; Winn et al., 2011; Noguera, 2003), therefore, I combed the narrative data I received from participants regarding punishments they received and deprivation of agency they experienced during

their juvenile years. Freire (1972) cautions, "to affirm that men and women are persons and as persons should be free, and yet to do nothing tangible to make this affirmation a reality, is a farce" (p. 50). I maintain that freedom is not a vague, intangible entity constructed by the imagination of those with socioeconomic privilege and idle time. Deprivation of freedom, likewise, is not imaginary. The reality is that African American schoolchildren are losing their freedom in early adolescence, and that institutions—including schools—promulgate policies complicit in the unnecessary deprivation of that freedom.

In yet another nod to Freire (1972), I too acknowledge that "no pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates" (p. 54). While African American students are repeatedly and punitively labeled, tracked, suspended, arrested, referred to law enforcement, expelled, incarcerated, and otherwise institutionalized (Clark, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Fine, 1991; Henning, 2017; Hirschfield, 2008; Noguera, 2003; Singer, 2009; Wacquant, 2001; Vavrus & Cole, 2002; Wolf, 2013), these acts of physical, spiritual, verbal, and psychological violence nevertheless do not render African American youth incapable of attaining agency. Rather, their articulation of their carceral experiences as detained juveniles, and their identification of pitfalls in educational and institutional policies, can inspire them to recognize or to further appreciate their own power to act upon the world in transformative ways while also providing educators and policymakers the tools for what Freire (1972) refers to as "liberating pedagogy."

Critical Race Theory (CRT), as mentioned in the introductory chapter, asserts that racism is inextricably tied to the legacy of educational and correctional policies in the

United States. The four tenets of CRT which will influence my interview questions and interpretation of participants' answers include: the normality and ubiquity of racism in every dimension of American life (Coates, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012); the promotion of the political and economic agendas of those in power under the guise of gains for marginalized peoples
(Alexander, 2012; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012); the wielding of colorblindness and other ostensibly neutral policies that impede actual social progress (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012); and the exertion of external forces on marginalized groups which further complicates the nature of their subjectivity (Alexander, 2012; Collins, 2015; Delgado and Stefancic, 2012).

An examination of the literacy practices and patterns of formerly-incarcerated African American male youth necessitates a view of language that acknowledges the linguistic validity of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), and to some extent, other vernaculars and creoles of the African Diaspora that have come to characterize the speech of America's Black people. According to Smitherman (1977) over 80% of African Americans are comfortable communicating in AAVE and many enjoy it as a home language variety. However, public schools traditionally impose Standard American English (SAE) as the accepted form of English (Rickford & Rickford, 2000), much to the socio-academic detriment of AAVE speakers. Therefore, this study prioritized the legitimacy of AAVE while simultaneously acknowledging the consequences for AAVE speakers in America's schools. The New London Group (1996) and leaders in the field of sociolinguistics (Gee, 2008; Rickford & Rickford, 2000) recognize that literacy is both a linguistic and cultural practice embedded in identity that

richly amalgamates history, tradition, and cultural values in sign-and-symbol systems. No longer do we have the luxury of conceptualizing literacy as decontextualized and apolitical (Heath, 1983; Dyson, 1993; Ong, 1982). This study did not, therefore, limit the discussion of literacy to reading, writing, and inference drawing about texts in SAE to which African American students have long been expected to respond, often in rote fashion, and then submit to standardized testing. Rather, this study sought to know the forms and exposures to literacy that were provided to African American male youth while they were incarcerated and under the auspices of state institutions. This study also examined their stories, and the way they told their stories, to better understand their lived experiences.

Participants and Setting

Kate Wolfson Esq., Program Manager for STRIVE Future Leaders at the Center for Urban Families, and Abdullah Mateen, Director of Succor Transitional Housing, both agreed to recruit participants for this study and to arrange the interview times and dates at their respective sites in Baltimore. I discussed the recruitment criteria at length with Wolfson and Mateen prior to their assistance with assembling the cohort of young men interviewed for this study. Accordingly, they knew that I was looking for African American males who were at least third-generation Americans. Because the experience of recently-immigrated Africans and the newly-minted American children of those immigrants is concertedly different from that of African Americans who have lived in this country for multiple generations, I determined that a criterion for participating in the study would be a long family history of African American identity. This too because the

legacy of the treatment of African Americans in this country is one to which recently-immigrated Africans are not privy.

CFUF provided the youngest participants in the study. Their STRIVE Future Leaders program is federally funded and is designed to serve Baltimore City youth between the ages of 18 and 24 who reside in neighborhoods of high poverty and who have been involved with the justice system. The young men and women enrolled in STRIVE Future Leaders go through an application process prior to admission. They take the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) in reading and mathematics; the federal government requires CFUF to obtain test scores, but the scores are not used for disqualification. Applicants also sign forms that attest to their understanding of the program requirements and expectations. After admission to STRIVE Future Leaders, the young men and women develop short-term and long-term goals pertaining to their education, employment, occupational skills, civic engagement, and personal aspirations; they can earn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification as well as Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) training for construction work. They engage in "rap sessions" with instructors, develop vision boards, reflect on their life choices, and volunteer in the community. CFUF also conducts mock interviews, assists with resume writing and job placement, emphasizes soft skills such as punctuality, and provides each graduate of the program with a business suit. In addition to the services provided through STRIVE Future Leaders, CFUF provides other programs and services that contribute to the socioeconomic and emotional health of city residents.

Mateen informed me that most of the young men in the Succor Transitional Program (STP) have a history of substance abuse and lack strong family connections.

STP is licensed to provide many services offered in hospitals. Residents of the housing program are assessed for the type of treatment that they will receive while living in the transitional house. The treatment usually involves medicine, sometimes Methadone or Suboxone, and residents are set up with a nurse in order to receive medicine once a week. They attend group therapy four times a week for nearly two and a half hours each time. They also speak one-on-one with counselors who help them structure their lives and who ensure that the young men go to their appointments on time and feel encouraged. Mateen said that he sees them almost every day and is frequently at the transitional home to chat or counsel—as needed. He says that one of his oft-used phrases is, "do what you got to do, so you can do what you want to do." One of Mateen's goals is to establish a personal relationship with each individual who receives care at the transitional home. Mateen says he can relate to so much of what the young men have been through; he grew up in Baltimore's Lexington Terrace Projects, which in part motivated him to study psychology and sociology in college. His long-time friend and business partner, Amine Watson, is the CEO of Succor Inc., and according to Mateen, "has a passion for getting people back on track."

The last participant for the study was acquired by referral and was on house arrest during the time of the interview.

Thus, the 12 young men who form the cohort for this study indeed represent a broad swath of African American young men between 18 and 30 who have experienced juvenile detention. It is of particular importance to me that I mention that all of these young men attended Baltimore City Public Schools. I deeply considered whether to mention the city by name. However, I determined that Baltimore itself was almost

personified during the qualitative interviews. For them, the Baltimore streets, the houses, the schools, the members of the community, the corner stores and alleyways, the police force, and the mayor, all contributed to participants' collective memory of their experiences in juvenile detention. After consulting Wolfson, Mateen, and members of my doctoral committee, we agreed that to anonymize the organizations that assisted me in selecting participants, and to anonymize Baltimore, would amount to diminishing the lived experiences of the young men with whom I spoke and would amount to decontextualizing their narratives.

A Note About Baltimore

Ta-Nehisi Coates has offered America a glimpse into present-day Baltimore in his renowned best seller, *Between the World and Me,* written as a long and loving letter to his son. In the book, Coates discusses America's blatant plunder of the African American body through centuries of slavery, and the policies designed after the demise of slavery to promulgate myriad forms of exploitation. Coates' description of Baltimore—of parents who spank their children to keep them out of the hands of police, of guns brandished on playgrounds by schoolboys to prove their bravado, of the daily physiological exertion to stay safe, of pervasive poverty, and of beautiful lives lost too soon, reveals what the crime statistics can only suggest. Baltimore, which is approximately 40 miles from the District of Columbia, was proclaimed the most dangerous big city in the nation by the USA Today in 2018 (Madhani). The article asserts, "Baltimore is the big city with the highest per capita murder rate in the nation, with nearly 56 murders per 100,000 people. At 343 murders in 2017, the city tallied the highest per capita rate in its history" (Madhani, 2018, para. 10).

Baltimore also recently galvanized the nation's attention over the death of Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old African American man who was arrested by Baltimore police for possessing an illegal knife. While Gray was in police custody being transported to the station, he sustained multiple spinal cord injuries, from which he died less than a week later, on April 19, 2015, (Baltimore Sun, 2015). The medical examiner ruled Gray's death in the hands of police a homicide. Subsequently, protests erupted throughout Baltimore; stores were lit on fire, property was damaged, and protesters were arrested en masse. Governor Larry Hogan declared a state of emergency and sent the National Guard to downtown Baltimore to quell the civil unrest and impose a curfew. It took until early May for the city to return to relative calm. Ultimately, despite serious charges facing the six officers responsible for killing Gray, trials for the officers ended in not guilty verdicts and some cases were even dropped altogether (Fox News, 2016).

A Closer Look at Participants

The participants in this study were formerly-incarcerated African American young men between the ages of 18 and 30 who experienced at least three months of incarceration as juveniles, and who, consequently, received a portion of their education while confined. The majority of participants are natives of Baltimore City, and all attended Baltimore City Public Schools. Eight participants were selected by Kate Wolfson Esq., Program Manager for STRIVE Future Leaders at the Center for Urban Families (CFUF), three participants were selected by Abdullah Mateen, Director of Succor Transitional Housing, a branch of the Succor Transitional Program (STP), and one participant was referred. Participants were interviewed onsite at CFUF, in a Succor transitional home, and at one private residence, respectively.

The first incarceration occurred for the majority of participants between the ages of 13 and 14; however, the youngest age of first incarceration was 10 (Diamond) and the oldest was 17 (Quentin). Their educational backgrounds varied as well; five of the participants graduated from high school (42%), three earned a GED (25%), and four of them have neither a high school education nor its equivalency (33%). Regarding post-secondary education, five of the participants attended at least one semester of college/trade school or are currently enrolled (42%), and seven have not pursued post-secondary education (58%). See Table 1 below.

Table 1.

#	Pseudonym	Current age	Age of first arrest	High School Diploma, GED	College/Post-Secondary Education
1	Tony	21	13	None	None
2	Seven	19	16	Diploma	None
3	Tom	24	13	Diploma	Attended community college for a few weeks before serving nearly 120 of incarceration associated with violating probation in order to attend his high school graduation—does not plan to return to college
4	Diamond	18	10	Completed 2 sections of the GED—English and Science, but does not yet have the GED	None
5	Amir	23	15	GED	Attends the University of Maryland in a nursing program
6	Jeremiah	19	13	None	None

7	DaDon	23	12	Diploma	Attends community college for business management and mortuary science
8	Kurt	23	13	None	None
9	Quentin	22	17	Diploma	Completed a few semesters in a community college pharmacy program—dropped out of college, but intends to return
10	Dayvon	25	14	GED	Enrolled in a one-year program in diesel mechanics
11	Jihad	26	14 or 15	Diploma	Completed one semester of community college in the aviation mechanics program—dropped out of school and does not plan to return
12	Ralph	30	14 or 15	GED	None

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection was qualitative interviews. Twelve African American young men between the ages of 18 and 30 were interviewed; ninety minutes were allotted for each one-on-one interview. Eight of the participants for this study were completing the federally-funded STRIVE Future Leaders re-entry program at Center for Urban Families (CFUF); they were interviewed in a private office onsite. Three participants lived in transitional housing provided by the Succor Transitional Program (STP), which specializes in substance abuse treatment; they spoke to me individually at the dining room table of the transitional home. One participant, who was referred to participate in the study, was on house arrest; I interviewed him on the porch of his family home. Although the central method for this phenomenological study was interviews; memoing was maintained during the interviews to provide a basis for

preliminary interpretations of the data. The interview questions (see Appendix A) developed for this investigation pertained to literacy experiences before, during, and after juvenile detention. Furthermore, while participants told their stories, I noted when participants were emphatic, nostalgic, disoriented, upset, or proud, in an effort to acknowledge such emotional content for later coding. My research questions presupposed that the content of each narrative would be as revealing about participants as the way in which it was told.

The research questions are as follows:

(1) How do participants characterize the role of institutions—such as schools, correctional facilities, and halfway houses—in their formal and informal literacy development and usage?

(2) How do participants interpret the role of literacy in their academic, economic, and social lives?

(3) What does the narrative data of participants reveal about their formal and informal discourse patterns through the lens of the Multiliteracies framework?

Step One. I met Wolfson and Mateen through mutual acquaintances in the re-entry sphere. I spoke to Wolfson and Mateen about the nature of my research project and communicated my concerns about procuring participants who met all of the criteria. Wolfson and Mateen agreed to help. I learned during my phone conversations with them, that perpetrators of violent crimes, even if they are children, can be sentenced to prison with adults and accordingly, are stripped of their rights as juveniles. I had to clarify that my study called for young men, no older than 30 years of age, who had experienced incarceration in juvenile detention facilities, even in if their sentences also spanned time

in prison. Wolfson and Mateen used my criteria to identify participants within their organizations. Wolfson and Mateen then scheduled the days and times that I would interview participants onsite at CFUF and STP's transitional home, respectively. Regarding Quentin, who was on house arrest, he was referred to me. Quentin and I spoke on the phone a few times about the purpose of my study and the participant criteria; then we decided that the interview would take place on his porch.

Step Two. Interviews for this study were conducted for two weeks commencing on June 12, 2018 and ending on June 26, 2018. A total of eight young men between 18 and 24 years of age from CFUF participated. Wolfson arranged a private office where I could sit with participants for the one-on-one interviews. The space included two long black desks; at each desk, two chairs were positioned to face each other with the desk intervening. The room was scantly furnished otherwise. A pack of printer paper, a phone, and a computer sat neatly at the far end of the desk that I selected to use. A few packages of chocolate pudding were on the bookshelf. Spoons individually wrapped in plastic filled a cardboard box near the pudding. A window with slightly opened blinds let in the sunlight. Wolfson ushered participants into the space at the onset of each interview. She introduced them to me with a few glowing words about their accomplishments before gently closing the door as she left.

For the duration of the data collection process, I arrived regularly at CFUF with my laptop, journal, and materials to sit in the room and await interviewees. Some of the young men were coming from work on public transportation and arrived with skin ruddy from the June sun; sometimes they took chocolate pudding and a spoon from the shelf or entered the room with a paper cup of cold water. I realized that even though the

participants were being monetarily compensated for their time, I owed them words of gratitude as they sat down heavily to answer my questions.

Three participants belonged to the Succor Transitional Program (STP) and my interviews were in their home. Because the Succor program is not geared exclusively to individuals between 18 and 24 the way CFUF's STRIVE Future Leaders is designed, I had the opportunity to speak to young men who evaluated their childhood educational and carceral experiences with the insight that maturity bestows; these interviewees were Dayvon (25), Jihad (26), and Ralph (30). I spoke to each respective participant individually in the dining room. A few cushioned chairs were placed around the dining table and the participants had agreed that this was the best place to talk. The adjacent room was the kitchen. The smell of rice boiling and meat baking in the oven wafted into the dining room. So too did cigarette smoke from the kitchen screen door and the sound of children outside playing drums intermittently. Other residents of the house walked in and out of the kitchen, most of them nodded to us respectfully as they passed through the dining room. The interviews were virtually uninterrupted, and participants seemed to feel at ease in their own home as they embarked on conversations about juvenile incarceration which, in their cases, often came just before long sentences in adult facilities.

I interviewed Quentin, the participant on house arrest, on his front porch on one of the coolest mornings of June. I remember consciously choosing not to hang my jacket on the back of the folder chair that Quentin gestured me toward as he apologized for the gnats. The air was pleasant, and other than a neighbor down the street mowing his lawn, the environment was serene so early in the day. A member of Quentin's family waved to me from the window and then lifted the glass pane to express words of welcome. As

Quentin sat, he tugged his boot up, perhaps in an attempt to cover the GPS device that encircled his ankle, but he had already told me his circumstances.

Step Three. As soon as each participant was seated with me, I thanked him for agreeing to participate in my study and I extended an envelope containing $75 in cash. I asked him to count the money and make sure it was all there before he sealed the envelope or tucked the money into his wallet. Once that was settled, I apprised the participant of the purpose of my study, the types of questions he would be asked, and the confidentiality I am obligated to provide. I notified him of the accessibility of nearby counselors, and I assured him that he could leave at any time.

I asked participants if they consented (see Appendix B) to be audio recorded for the duration of the interview; Wolfson and Mateen had already informed them of my intention to record, so the request was not a surprise. The shortest interview was only 35 minutes (Jeremiah) and the longest were for two hours (Amir and DaDon); however, the majority of interviews lasted about 70 minutes. On a few rare occasions, I had to delete recorded information when participants discussed an open court case or sensitive information related to the circumstances of the death of a loved one. Interestingly, each participant expressed skepticism or disinterest about the informed consent process (see Appendix B) that necessarily preceded the interview and took about 15 minutes, assuring me that he would not need a counselor at any time and that he was in full control of what he would say and what he would not say. However, the reality was that neither the participants nor I realized how emotionally wrought these interviews would be regardless of whether they were scheduled at the end of a full day of work or just after sunrise. Perhaps Wolfson had some idea about the emotional magnitude of the project upon

which the participants and I were embarking. She lightly tapped at the door of the interview room when she stepped out to buy a meal or make a phone call, just to let me and the participant know when she was leaving the building and how long it would take for her to return. She discreetly reminded me that I had her cellphone number and assured me that I could call her at any time. Similarly, Mateen let me know that he was proximal to the interview site, and that he was available by cellphone. In reviewing the informed consent document with Quentin, he pointed at the open window. "I'm good," he assured me. "My family's here."

Step Four. Before posing research questions, I asked each participant to choose a pseudonym. They chose names that were meaningful to them. Perhaps the first narratives they told me were the unrecorded stories of how they selected their pseudonyms. I was fascinated by how seriously they took on the task of renaming themselves and how long some of them deliberated on the choice aloud.

Step Five. I asked open-ended, semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix A) and encouraged participants to elaborate by providing examples from their lives. At times while trying to make sense of their experiences, participants' narrative meandering led them to particularly painful events and their narrative content was much more suited for a study in criminal justice. For example, Kurt discusses with gruesome detail his four months in what he describes as a solid plastic cage, which constituted solitary confinement when he served time in an adult facility at sixteen years old. Although Kurt is now 23 years old, and he has spent a third of his life in correctional facilities, the four months of solitary confinement still haunt him. He recalls days when he would scream and scream and scream with the dim awareness that the cell was soundproof and that not

only could no one hear him, but that no one wanted to either. He asked me, did I understand what that could do to a person? I listened deeply. I respected participants' discretion in determining whether and how to answer my interview questions.

Step Six. Although Wolfson and Mateen both assured me that no compensation was necessary, I sent $100 to each program as a small donation for the use of their interview sites and the opportunity to speak to participants of their programs. Further, Wolfson and Mateen and I continue to engage in conversations regarding re-entry work. Mateen invited me to a Baltimore community event hosted in part by STP at the end of the month of June in 2018. Over 200 people were in attendance; Mateen and Ralph (who I had interviewed) presented on their recent work in their neighborhoods. Our mutual intention is that my contribution to the improvement of social and educational conditions for young people who are at risk of entering the justice system, and who have recently emerged therefrom, will continue long after the completion of this dissertation.

Data Analysis

My analysis began during the interviews. As soon as participants entered the room, I took note of their clothing and distinguishing features. I wanted to be able to remember who they were as I listened to audio recordings of the interviews later. For example, while interviewing the participant who used the pseudonym Seven, I memoed:

> Seven seemed to enjoy reading and was reading a psychology book when he entered the office. He pointed to a passage for me to read about Anna Freud. I read it quietly to myself. I thought that was the best way to read it. He stood next to my chair and hunched over me as I followed the text with my index finger. Anna Freud was a child psychologist and the

daughter of Sigmund Freud. Seven was so pleased that I had never heard of Anna Freud before.

In addition to writing about my observations of and interactions with participants, I took note of the emotional content overlaying their words and of the activities occurring when the tape recorder was only picking up static —such as when Amir pauses to weep into his hands about the recent death of his daughter. Without active memoing, I may have lost the details and the candor of what I witnessed.

I hired transcription services for six of the twelve interviews; however, I reviewed those six transcriptions against my own notes while the corresponding audio files were playing. I corrected the discrepancies that I found between the raw audio data and the transcriptions. Further, I added the requisite punctuation I considered representative of the start and stop of speech segments. The remaining six interviews I transcribed myself. Despite my use of the typed renditions of participant narratives, I repeatedly listened to the audio files throughout my exploration of the data. I wanted to keep hearing their voices. The data are most sincere in the audio files. What participants shared with me, truly resides there, despite my attempts to render them whole and coherent in print.

Open and Axial Coding

After collecting the interview data and transcribing the data into print, I began the open coding process of inspecting each transcript line by line to establish a rudimentary understanding and categorization of what participants had revealed. According to Holton (2007), "Line-by-line coding forces the researcher to verify and saturate categories, minimizes missing an important category, and ensures relevance by generating codes with emergent fit to the substantive area under study" (p.275). Thus, for each line of

transcribed raw data, I initially identified and labeled the conspicuous ideas, objects, and occurrences predominant in the participants' narratives. During subsequent sweeps through the data, I employed axial coding in which I recognized patterns consistent across the narrative data and the emergence of salient themes.

At times this process involved combining or distinguishing initial categories to more accurately portray the subtleties and complexities of the data. Furthermore, my coding (at each phase) did acknowledge that some themes that emerged were elicited by virtue of the research questions themselves. According to Given (2008), "The topic of study and issues of concern to the researcher play a key role in the ideas and concepts identified; however, the researcher is advised to be vigilant in keeping an open mind when analyzing the data" (p. 582). Unique to my coding process was the intention to code what participants said about their carceral experiences in addition to how they used language to say it. Strauss and Corbin (1998) point out that no phase of coding is neat; they also caution that inconsistencies in the data should not be disregarded by researchers for the sake of convenience.

Reflexivity and Credibility Checks

The need to protect the analysis of participants' narrative data from the incursion of my own preconceived ideas and biases was mitigated in a number of ways. First, I engaged in strategies that promote reflexivity. According to Payne and Payne (2004),

> Reflexivity is the practice of researchers being self-aware of their own beliefs, values and attitudes, and their personal effects on the setting they have studied, and self-critical about their research methods and how they have been applied, so

> that the evaluation and understanding of their research findings, both by themselves and their audience, may be facilitated and enhanced (p. 191).

My above-mentioned disclosure of the following points was the first step of my reflexive process:

1. I have raised three African American sons to adulthood in America.
2. I observed African American male teenagers at a local detention facility during spoken-word workshops in 2010.
3. I instructed African American male teenagers at the same local detention facility in a linguistics class in 2011 a few months after my observations of those students.
4. I completed a graduate degree in Applied Linguistics at Georgetown University and I have come to appreciate the equality and legitimacy of all varieties of all languages and the people who speak those languages.
5. I believe that several components of Critical Race Theory are true and serve to explain the Prison Industrial Complex as well as many of the laws, policies, and attitudes that formulate the personality of the United States of America.
6. I believe that education is the primary means to transformative action; it is the route to empowerment, enfranchisement, confidence, and financial wellbeing.

I also endeavored to be a reflexive researcher by actively memoing. Accordingly, during my interviews with participants, I jotted down notes that included descriptions of their clothing, gestures, and facial expressions as well as my impressions of them and the narratives they told. Fortunately, because the narratives were audio recorded, I repeatedly and attentively listened to them. I distinctly remember each participant.

Member Checking

In order to maximize the credibility of my research, I engaged in member checking with participants throughout the interviews. According to Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013), it is best to begin member checking at the onset of data collection; they write, "In interviews, it is advisable to summarize the key points the respondent is making and ask for confirmation that this is an accurate synopsis or you can reiterate a key point back to the interviewee (i.e. did you mean …?)" (p. 136). I have provided an excerpt from one of the interview transcripts which is somewhat illustrative of my usage of the member-checking strategy coupled with follow-up questioning. In the interview excerpt below, Quentin initially laments that there was nothing to do in juvenile detention. I wanted to know if my interpretation of what he was saying could be encapsulated in the word *boredom,* so I proffered to him the word *boredom* as the summary of this particular experience.

Quentin: You have nothing to do. Just being there- I'm not- just being there for a day is crazy, like…

Rabiah: Boredom, sounds like, is a problem in there?

Quentin: Yeah, for real.

Rabiah: What kind of challenges does that create for- for the young people there? Extreme boredom like that?

Quentin: It creates- it creates- it's kind of- self-blockage. It blocks you off from wanting to do anything, that's what it did for me. I was so bored, I didn't care about nothing there, like, I'm already in here, you think I care if you gonna take this

> away from me? I can't do phone calls because I'm not going to school? I don't care if y'all take my phone calls or visits. C'mon now, like what, I get to visit my parents, or whatever, for thirty minutes- I don't want them to visit me in the first place. Talking on the phone, like, I'm charging them money to talk to me and I kinda don't want to do that either because I want them to give me money for commissary.

Quentin's confirmation that he was indeed bored, led me to ask another question which in turn elicited his robust description of the effects of boredom on his psyche and his choices.

Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) caution that a disadvantage of this approach is that respondents may become self-conscious or self-corrective about what they say. However, I noticed that by authentically engaging with participants and feeling free to laugh with them, cry with them, and share in their indignation, they conferred stark and honest information. I let my tacit agreement with participants that we were free to speak our minds dictate the ebb and flow of the discussions beyond the scope of the interview questions. Perhaps an excerpt demonstrative of my rapport with participants, even when I felt uncomfortable with narrative content, is manifest in my conversation with Jihad as he describes the events leading up to his first incarceration:

Rabiah: How many of them were there?

Jihad: It had to be at least six, six to eight of them.

Rabiah: Beating up the same person?

Jihad: Mm-hmm. They took his jacket, his glasses, whatever fell out of his pockets. A shoe came off, I think.

Rabiah: They hurt him?

Jihad: Huh?

Rabiah: Did they hurt him?

Jihad: Just some lumps and stuff, a lot of lumps, but –

Rabiah: Lumps?

Jihad: Yeah. He was all right, though. He was fine.

Rabiah: No, he wasn't.

Jihad: *Laughs*

Rabiah: No, he wasn't. *Laughs*

Jihad: He ran straight to the closest police car he found. *Laughs* --it was like a police car up in the shopping center. He ran straight there, told them what happened.

Rabiah: Yeah?

Jihad: They came around. The police came. So, everybody scattered. I stayed right there because, like I said, I didn't do anything so why I got to run?

Rabiah: Yeah.

Jihad: And they grabbed me up anyway, and that was my first time.

When I express my astonishment regarding the unfairness of the fight, Jihad does not show any reticence about continuing the narrative:

Rabiah: Beating up the same person?

Jihad: Mm-hmm.

When I am rattled by the idea that the victim in Jihad's story may be seriously injured, he laughs before intimating that the recipient of the thrashing "ran straight to the closest police car he found" and that ultimately, Jihad was arrested for witnessing the incident (and perhaps was the one who suffered the most). Although my understanding of participants' narratives evolves throughout the duration of the interviews, and during subsequent runs through the transcribed data, participants apparently appreciated authentic interaction.

Peer Review

Another form of credibility checking upon which I relied was peer review. Eddie Ellis is an African American man in his early 40s. He spent four months of his adolescence in the Oak Hill Youth Correctional Facility, just outside of the District of Columbia. Not long after his release from juvenile detention, he was arrested and found guilty of manslaughter. He served 15 years in prison before his release in 2006. Since that time, he has advocated on behalf of young people who are court-involved. Ellis works at the Campaign for Fair Sentencing of Youth (CFSY) where he is the Incarcerated Children's Advocacy Network (ICAN) coordinator. (The mission statement of CFSY emphasizes their efforts to abolish life sentences for children).

Ellis is the founder and CEO of a nonprofit organization One by 1 Inc., which provides reentry services for people coming home from prison and support for their families and loved ones. Ellis is also a motivational speaker who shares his insight with lawyers, probation officers, and social workers. For the purpose of this dissertation, Ellis and I

met to discuss my research in its inchoate phases as I decided on my research questions. Before I interviewed participants, Ellis advised me on how to interact with them. After I had conducted the interviews and recognized themes, Ellis provided me with feedback. I consider the counsel of my peer reviewer indispensable to this research project. The perspective of an African American male peer reviewer who experienced incarceration as a juvenile in a local facility (in addition to experiencing it as an adult) and who interacts regularly with detained African American male youth and their families, tempered the biases I otherwise brought to the narrative data. According to Given (2008),

> In qualitative projects, researchers may call upon peers with relevant methodological and content area expertise and experience to scrutinize and critique a study's procedures and outcomes. This type of peer review, sometimes called investigator triangulation, provides researchers with an objective source familiar with the research or the phenomenon being explored to review the study's methodology, to analyze portions of data, and to critique findings (p. 605).

Thus, Given (2008) posits that peer review/investigator triangulation is a way of increasing the credibility of the research.

Once a situation of violence and oppression has been established, it engenders an entire way of life and behavior for those caught up in it — oppressors and oppressed alike. Both are submerged in this situation, and both bear the marks of oppression. Analysis of existential situations of oppression reveals that their inception lay in an act of violence — initiated by those with power. –Paulo Freire

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

I interviewed 12 African American young men between the ages of 18 and 30 who experienced incarceration as juveniles, some of whom subsequently experienced prison. All of the participants grew up predominately in Baltimore and were sentenced through Baltimore City courts. The data that I collected after one-on-one semi-structured interviews lasting on average 70 minutes, reveals much about their carceral experiences, the complexity of their home lives, the impact of pervasive and proximal violence, and the role of dedicated educators in their lives. In this chapter, I begin with in-depth profiles of each participant; these profiles are intended to provide context for my subsequent exploration of the narrative data in response to the research questions.

Participant Profiles

Tony, 21, CFUF

Tony is paralyzed from the chest down. He was hit by a car in October 2017 and dragged for blocks. His arms, legs, pelvic bones, back, ribs, and shoulders broke. His skull cracked from repeated impact with the ground; oxygen seeped into his brain. A fractured bone punctured his spinal cord. His skin tore. He was comatose for 30 days and almost died. Now, he is home again. Some of his wounds have healed, but his scars are deep, and he is in a wheelchair. At the time of the accident he was crossing the street on the way to his new job at a construction site—a job placement that he had earned through successful completion of the STRIVE Future Leaders program at CFUF. He was

making progress with his life. He experienced his first incarceration when he was 13 years old for stealing bikes out of the garage of a wealthy family on the other side of town. He recidivated to juvenile detention repeatedly for months at a time—throughout the remainder of his childhood. Ultimately, he committed a crime for which he was sentenced to an adult facility where he turned 18 and spent his early adulthood. He did not earn his high school diploma or GED, but he did complete certifications while incarcerated, and he prides himself on the physical and emotional progress he has made since the accident.

Seven, 19, CFUF

Seven wants to be a psychologist. He wants to be able to coach young people through the emotionally-turbulent times of their lives. Seven remembers the day a fellow student confronted him with a loaded gun in class and threatened to kill him. Seven had been able to fend him off. One week later, he witnessed the fatal stabbing of his best friend at school. They were sophomores. Despite his grief, Seven was able to graduate on time. His first arrest was at the age of 16—around the same time that his best friend was killed. Seven was in and out of juvenile detention a few times between 16 and 17 for misdemeanor offenses. He recalls that much of the fighting he was involved in was in response to being teased about this dark complexion. The teasing had been most intense in middle school. Seven had asked his mother not to send him there. She had made the decision to relocate him away from his elementary school community where his cousins and neighborhood friends had looked out for him. Seven felt alienated at his new school. He pinpoints the separation from his elementary school peers as a factor that contributed to much of the hardship that he endured in childhood. Indeed, the murder of his best

friend was all the more tragic because he was the one friend Seven had known since kindergarten. Seven considers himself resilient. A source of nostalgia is his early childhood years with his grandfather who read him children's book, such as *Winnie the Pooh*, and taught him how to write. For a while Seven was ambidextrous, much to his grandfather's amazement. Although Seven works full time at a poultry-packaging company near his home, he considers earning a college degree essential to what he wants to accomplish with his life.

Tom 24, CFUF

Tom has spent a third of his life behind bars. According to Tom, correctional institutions have shaped him into the person that he is today. He learned the meaning of respect while he was confined because of the fatal consequences he witnessed for those who blithely ignored the rules imposed by the guards and the social norms imposed among the inmates. Tom muses that perhaps all young men should experience prison for a few years of their lives so that they will learn respect and discipline. He wonders too whether his musings are sane. Tom was sent to a psychiatric institution where he was committed for a short time and diagnosed with bi-polar disorder during his middle school years. He remembers talking to doctors for hours about his experiences. He remembers too that the doctors responded by dispensing more medicine. The pills made him feel tired, dizzy, and disconnected. Tom is skeptical about the efficacy of psychotropic medicine and treatment. For a while, he aspired to be a psychologist, but now that he has been out of prison for one year straight for the first time in nearly a decade, he has found music is truly cathartic for him. When he is not working full time, he is making music. He performs his music on weekends at events around Baltimore.

Diamond, 18, CFUF

Diamond was in jail when his little sister collapsed from a severe asthma attack. He remained in jail while she fought for her life in the hospital for two weeks. He remained in jail while she was buried. He begged the guards to let him see her; his requests were repeatedly denied. When Diamond was released from jail, he went straight home to his sister's room and sat in there a long time. He found a silver charm bracelet in her drawer that had been one of her favorite pieces of jewelry. Diamond put it on. He wears it every day. Diamond was ten years old at his first arrest. He remembers bragging about it when he returned to his fifth-grade classroom. He felt tough and invincible then. He recidivated several times for increasingly serious offenses. During those years he learned a lot about tattoos. Tattoos cover his body. The tattoos on his face he did himself. He is designing a tattoo about his sister to have positioned just above his eyes. He is not sure that his sister would approve of the idea, but he feels compelled to immortalize her on his skin. Diamond lives in a group home and is currently being monitored by three different institutions. He is anxious about whether he can successfully juggle the competing demands on his time; the consequence for any misstep is incarceration. He has 13 felony convictions on his record.

Amir, 23, CFUF

Amir attended public school throughout his elementary education. Shortly after one of his sisters was accepted to the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), a prestigious charter school in Baltimore, Amir was able to start there too. At KIPP he enjoyed books in the library, especially the Bluford series, a fictional series for teens set in an inner-city high school. However, he did not conform to the rules and structure of KIPP and

ultimately spent two years in seventh grade before finishing middle school and being sent to a neighborhood alternative school because of misbehavior. At the alternative school, Amir was disheartened by the frequent drug sales and drug usage of his peers, violence, and the preponderance of teachers from the Philippines. Amir considered the foreign teachers outsiders and did not feel that he could learn anything from them. Amir's first incarceration occurred while he was attempting to repeat the ninth grade at the alternative school. His mother was able to convince the judge to mandate a placement for Amir at Job Corps. He spent a year living at a Job Corps facility where he earned his GED. Amir is now a nursing student at the University of Maryland. He wants to be a healer within his community. He recently suffered the loss of his daughter who died in utero at five months old when her mother was viciously beaten by an ex-boyfriend. Amir still weeps for his child.

Jeremiah, 19, CFUF

Jeremiah had been to juvenile detention for petty offenses three times by the time he was arrested again at 15 years old. He had previously served sentences in increments of one, two, and three months, respectively. At age 15, he waited for his mother to arrive on his court date and make an effort to take him home. He knew that she was upset with him about an argument, but he was shocked when she did not show up in court. He was sent to juvenile detention for four months. Throughout that time, he attended the compulsory classes. He remembers being inundated with packets that he did not find interesting. He yearned for some new tidbit of information to wrap his mind around. Sometimes within the span of a month, he would receive the same packet twice, which made him feel like the teachers had no concern about the quality of the materials juvenile

inmates were asked to complete. When he was released from detention, he expected that his transcript would also be released too; it was not. The public high school refused to credit him for the undocumented work he had finished in juvenile detention. Jeremiah opted to participate in the Youth Build program, which paid students for completing their schoolwork. When the program was abruptly halted by Baltimore City, Jeremiah acquired his transcript from Youth Build and attempted to enroll in traditional classes at the local public school. He was denied enrollment. Although he plans to take the GED, his priority is to find a place to live.

DaDon, 23, CFUF

DaDon is one of 16 children, and the household was always bustling. When he needed somewhere to go for solace, he knew he could call his uncle. He took DaDon to baseball games and to visit his father in prison. When his uncle sickened from cirrhosis of the liver, DaDon accompanied him to the hospital and stayed at his bedside. When his uncle died, DaDon felt utterly lost. He was 11 years old. Within a few months, he was lashing out. DaDon was at least six feet tall already, despite his young age. His height and strength inclined him to impart more physical damage during his tantrums than school security could handle. He beat a teacher over the head with a chair; he stabbed his principal through the hand with a butcher knife. He was expelled from middle school and sent to juvenile detention. After his release, he was placed in a group home and not permitted to return to his family. He recidivated frequently. Throughout this time DaDon kept a diary. By writing about his experiences, he learned to work through his pain on paper. He also began to share his story with audiences. Both forms of expression were cathartic. He graduated from high school on time. Shortly thereafter, while visiting

family in the South, he was riding in a car with his mother and girlfriend when the car was hit by a tractor trailer on the passenger's side where DaDon was sitting. The car rolled into a ditch and lit fire. DaDon's mother and girlfriend were able to escape the vehicle unharmed. They pulled DaDon through the passenger window. Unconscious, he was medivacked to the shock trauma unit. He awoke in a full body cast. As his body healed, the doctors removed the cast in stages. He was released from the hospital in a rib brace and crutches. A few days later, he was a passenger in a car hit by a school bus being driven by an inattentive driver. DaDon was awarded monetary compensation through the courts. A few months after the court decision, DaDon was shot several times by a neighbor attempting to rob him. Five bullets are still lodged in DaDon's body. He understands that his life is miraculous. He dedicates every day to taking care of his family and improving the lives of Baltimore City's children through volunteer work.

Kurt, 23, CFUF

Kurt was carrying a firearm when the blade of a knife was thrust into his back within two inches of his heart. He remembers the panic that he felt in that moment as he realized he might die. He was 14 years old. Fearful that he might be stabbed again, he fired his handgun at the person holding the blade; that person died. Kurt survived. He was sent away for several years—to juvenile detention and then to prison. The time he served as a teenager in an adult facility haunts him the most. He remembers solitary confinement at the age of 16 in what he describes as a soundproof plastic cage. He remembers hearing his own voice screaming—and no one coming. He also remembers how his teenage body ached for food and water when guards denied all the prisoners on his tier sustenance for three full days because a few prisoners had slung their feces at

guards as they made their rounds. Kurt questions what it means to be a human being. He questions whether it is his own paranoia or whether people are staring at him and thinking accusatory thoughts. Sometimes he is afraid of himself. Sometimes he prefers that people are scared of him so that they just leave him alone. He still wonders why he was sentenced harshly when he was the victim of a near-fatal stabbing the day he took a life.

Quentin, 22, House Arrest

Quentin lives with his father on the outskirts of Baltimore City. Quentin refers to his childhood as pampered and protective; he laments that he did not feel prepared for the social challenges that he encountered in high school. His first experience with incarceration was at the age of 17; he was involved in the physical assault of a teenager from his school. Quentin spent a few months in detention for that offense but enrolled in an online high school after his release and earned high marks and a diploma by 19 years old. In keeping with his family's expectations, he attended community college where he quickly completed developmental prerequisites and embarked on college-level coursework in a pharmacy program. He also secured a job at a healthcare facility in his neighborhood. However, his friendships with peers who drank heavily and dabbled in drugs, mired him with petty offenses and ultimately, additional arrests. He lost his job and had to leave college for incarceration. Quentin remains hopeful. He celebrates the academic achievement of his aunt, who recently earned her Associate Degree at the age of 35, and of a cousin who is studying to be a registered nurse. He plans to return to college.

Dayvon, 25, STP

Dayvon's first experience with the juvenile justice system at 14 years old resulted in his confinement at a facility in Iowa, where he spent over a year. Dayvon felt isolated and in danger throughout that time. He was far from his family, so he rarely received visitors and he was unaccustomed to being in an environment of almost exclusively Caucasian males. While he was in the juvenile detention facility, he did attend classes, but did not find the teachers to be concerned about his progress. He was also upset by the fact that after a year of juvenile incarceration and doing his schoolwork, his transcripts were not sent to Baltimore City Public Schools. Because of the lack of transfer of transcripts, he failed ninth grade; the school maintained that they could not promote him to tenth grade with no proof of credits for ninth grade. Ultimately, Dayvon earned his GED instead of a high school diploma. Dayvon has always been interested in Black history, but he never learned about it while in public schools except for discussions of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Rather, it was not until his incarceration that he learned Black history; his mentors were gang members from the same neighborhood who took him under their wing. Dayvon served time in the juvenile and adult systems. His goal now is to become a diesel mechanic; he is enrolled to begin training.

Jihad, 26, STP

Jihad began his education in another county and transferred into Baltimore City Public Schools halfway through his high school education. He complains that the city schools were not rigorous and did not offer any math courses beyond advanced algebra while he was there. Jihad still laments that precalculus, calculus, and trigonometry were not even in the course selections. During his detainment in a juvenile correctional facility,

he attended classes, but again he found the work remedial, and he considered his detained peers special education recipients, with few exceptions. He asserts that their academic needs were not met and that his were not either. After leaving the facility, he returned to high school and graduated at the age of 17. Then he began a semester at the community college with dreams of becoming a pilot. He planned to take as many math classes as he could sign up for. His advisor gave him a schedule that obligated him to be at school five days of the week and his classes were separated by multiple hours. His school days started early and ended late. He had the demands of using public transportation and returning to his group home before curfew. He did not know that he could change his schedule to meet his needs. Ultimately, although he enjoyed his aviation and mathematics coursework, he dropped out of college because he could not keep up with the schedule. He recidivated shortly thereafter. Currently, he is writing his business plan for a real estate company that he wants to start.

Ralph, 30, STP

Ralph remembers with pride his presentation of his life story in prison. He had written it himself; it was the first writing assignment that Ralph ever completed from start to finish. The other prisoners were receptive to his story and applauded him. It chronicles his removal from his mother's home when he was two-years-old because of her drug addiction and subsequent neglect of him, the eight years with his grandmother before her death, and then his life in foster care and group homes until he aged out. So too does he discuss navigating gangs and violence in his middle school years before committing crimes of his own for which he served time as a juvenile and then as an adult. Now that he is out of prison with a GED that he earned at the age of 28. He aspires to

join the army. The structure of the army and the uniform appeal to him. So too does his fond memory of watching a cousin's graduation from a military academy in the South. In order to join the army, he needs to receive a moral waiver signed by the mayor himself. If Ralph is barred from joining the army because of his criminal record, he plans to own a transitional home, not unlike the one where he now receives shelter and counseling services.

Emergent Themes Corresponding to the First Research Question

My first research question is as follows: how do participants characterize the role of public institutions—such as schools, correctional facilities and halfway houses—in their formal and informal literacy development and usage? In my analysis of the narrative data provided by participants, five prominent themes emerged: a) home and school influenced foundational literacy skills in equal measure, b) elementary school served as a joyous learning community, c) middle school did not provide the infrastructure needed for adolescence, d) formal coursework in juvenile detention was often boring, remedial, and irrelevant, but meaningful literacy opportunities did exist, and e) the interplay between juvenile detention and public high school affected participants' educational trajectories. An exploration of the themes, which are not ordered hierarchically, is provided with illustrative excerpts from the narrative data of participants.

Home and School Influenced Foundational Literacy Skills in Equal Measure

Roughly half of participants who explicitly discussed exposure to stories in early childhood said that they experienced their first stories at home. Seven remembers being in his grandfather's care on a daily basis in the years before elementary school. His grandfather often read him children's books such as *Winnie the Pooh*. His grandfather

also taught him how to read and write. Seven remembers writing with both hands and his grandfather proclaiming him ambidextrous. Seven refers to that time of structured activity and affection at his grandfather's house as "grandpop's school."

Similarly, Tom recalls learning to read at an early age from his family members. His aunts purchased *Hooked on Phonics* for his cousins who had difficulty reading, and Tom would sit with them and practice. When Tom began the Head Start program, he was already reading. Tom's prowess with reading and writing enabled him to engage with texts such as *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl,* which resonated with him during middle school.

In some homes where reading was not a tradition, conversations among family members were frequent and involved the sharing of memories, which bestowed a sense of connectedness. Amir and DaDon remember asking about their respective absent fathers and then cherishing the stories they heard. According to Amir,

> Amir: The first story that I remember was the story of why my father wasn't around. That was the most important story to me at that time. I wasn't really into like books and stuff when I was young. I liked playing games, things like that. Going outside [….] So that was the most significant story at that time for me. And it stuck with me because I was young, and I still remember it.
>
> DaDon: As a kid, I heard stories about my father and stuff like that [….] Always hearing stories.

The positive stories about their fathers that Amir and DaDon heard during childhood not only provided them comfort in coping with the absence of these men from their lives, but also a burgeoning sense of the positive sentiments that stories can stir. For other participants, stories were not a central aspect of family interaction and even responding to my interview questions about stories during childhood evoked discomfort. Tony says, "Nobody's never read me—nobody's never really told me no stories. I can't think of none. Imaginary stories or nothing. Can you go to the next one?" Tony seems to have deeply considered what I was asking of him because he qualifies his answer as comprehensive by saying, "imaginary stories or nothing." Presumably, this phrase encompasses children's fairy tales, fables, and nursery rhymes in addition to nonfiction. Tony also exhibits his discomfort with the topic by requesting that I move on to the next interview question. He has a similar response to the subsequent question when I prompt him to recount his earlies memory of writing or telling a story, "as far as any writing about stories or stories getting told to me, I was never in that category." Apparently, at least under first consideration, Tony classifies those who are reading, listening to, writing, and telling stories as belonging to a particular category, from which he excludes himself. Tony discloses that he was diagnosed with lead poisoning and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), both of which he blames for his lack of progress with literacy in school.

Dayvon's admission that he had never been read stories at home is contextualized in a larger delineation of his mother as someone who did not nurture him in his youth.

Dayvon: The earliest time I heard a story…

Rabiah: Mm-hmm.

Dayvon: Well, my mother never read me no story, so that would have been in school.

Rabiah: Mm-hmm.

Dayvon: Yeah. That had to be in school.

When Dayvon discusses his mother several speaking turns later, he reveals that she made the decision not to pick him up from the police station after an arrest when he was 14 years old. Police officers called Dayvon's mother to let her know that she had the option of taking him home while he awaited his case in court; she declined to get him. Dayvon was sentenced to over a year in Iowa at an institution which required its juvenile inmates to spend the day unearthing potatoes on acres of farmland. Dayvon says that he served 18 months altogether for the crime, but that he would have served much less time if his mother did not make him wait in juvenile detention for the interval between his arrest and sentencing. He laments aloud that he would never abandon a child the way that his mother abandoned him.

Ralph was separated from his mother at the age of two years because of maternal neglect. She was a drug addict and would drop him off at the houses of her friends and leave him there with few diapers and little milk. Child Protective Services placed him with his grandmother, but she did not read stories to him. Ralph says, " To be honest, growing up I can't really remember my parents or any relatives reading stories to me." Ralph resided with his grandmother for eight years before he she passed away, which left Ralph in the foster care system. For years afterward as he navigated foster care, group homes with as many as ten children under the supervision one houseparent, and juvenile detention facilities, he attended special education classes that were not able to mitigate

the formidable challenges that reading and writing dealt him in school. It was not until his mid-twenties in prison that Ralph concertedly sought traditional literacy skills.

Elementary School Served as a Joyous Learning Community

Consistently participants discuss the early years of their education with a lot of pride and nostalgia, seemingly in part because of the belief that the elementary-school community was a place where their teachers were doting, their friendships were deeply rooted, their coursework was rudimentary, and their antics were merely the play of children. Participants consider their teachers integral to the creation of safe space in elementary school. For example, Kurt's fifth grade teacher brought treats to school to celebrate special occasions and to motivate them.

Kurt: I had a good teacher. Her name was Ms. B. She just was encouraging at an early age to me. But that was the first person outside of family that I ever seen show they cared. Like, for birthdays, she used to give out birthday cards. There'd be two dollars in them.

Rabiah: *Laughs*

Kurt: *Laughs* Everybody knew. Everybody knew about that. They'd be like "my birthday coming, Ms. B.'s gonna give me two dollars and a card." And we used to get the fudge cookies or the butter crunch cookies at school.

Rabiah: Mm-hmm.

Kurt: Or the Fruit Roll Ups.

Rabiah: Mm-hmm.

Kurt: We used to love that.

Rabiah: So, she was encouraging?

Kurt: Mm-hmm.

Rabiah: So, what about your sixth-grade teacher? What happened there?

Kurt: Sixth grade?

Rabiah: When you started being the class clown?

Kurt: Sixth grade. It was middle school, so it was like a whole new world.

Kurt conspicuously mentions that Ms. B. was the first person outside of his family who showed him that she cared about him. To Kurt and the students in her classroom, Ms. B.'s distribution of sweets was just a token of the much larger action of paying careful attention to the students and taking the time to single them out for celebratory attention.

Another memorable form of interaction that participants remembered having with their teachers was field trips to places they had never before visited. Although these trips were local to Baltimore or the District of Columbia, such excursions were unchartered territory for most of the attending students. Diamond recalls a trip to the Baltimore Zoo with his fifth-grade teacher.

Diamond: Only reason I went is because that teacher was like, "Come on, Diamond, get these papers signed." I'd be like, "I don't wanna go." And she was like, "It's gonna be fun, trust me." And I was like, "Okay." And I ended up going.

Rabiah: Was it fun?

Diamond: Yeah. It ended up being fun, and I ain't think it was gonna be fun because I ain't like the people in the class. But, I was right next to her the whole time. And she real fun.

As Diamond discusses the trip to the zoo in more detail, he asserts that it was not only his bond with the teacher that makes the memory so stark for him, but the fact that she paid for the trip out of her own pocket when the principal decided that it was not in the budget. She also ensured that the members of the class came with her, as suggested in the quotation above. Moreover, Diamond remembers that she would come to class in costumes. When she was not wearing a costume, she was dressed up. Her effort, even in selecting her attire, left the impression on Diamond that she was enthusiastic about teaching.

For Seven, elementary school was an idyllic place where he was surrounded by people who loved him. He felt emotionally supported by peers who understood him, if for no other reason than because of how long they had been in school with him.

Seven: I went there from first to fifth. So, like, I knew mostly everybody. And, mostly everybody knew me. Either it was they knew me from my cousins or my sister, or they knew me because they went, was in class with me.

Seven's recollection of the deep-rootedness he experienced at his elementary school mirrors Tony's almost verbatim although Tony did not perform well academically and found it difficult to learn in class because of lead poisoning and ADHD.

Tony: When I was little, and I was going to public schools—this my neighborhood right here and I've been growing up

around here all my life. I went to this school right here […] my brothers—my family- my family, everybody went to that school, so you knew everybody, but as far as how life was or whatever, it was so beautiful.

Middle School did not Provide the Infrastructure Needed for Early Adolescence

For every participant in this study, the transition from elementary school to middle school was problematic and created a stumbling block for further development of school literacy and for future academic success. The challenges with middle school included the loss of a close-knit community, the burgeoning of consciousness and with it the sudden awareness of poverty, and the death of family members with whom the youth had developed strong attachments. For each of the participants, middle schools did not provide the emotional infrastructure they needed. Some of them precipitously descended into patterns of rage and self-destruction; neither classes nor counseling ameliorated the challenges of these precarious years.

Earlier in this chapter, Kurt reminisces about his fifth-grade teacher Ms. B., and how she distributed butter crunch cookies and birthday cards containing money to her students. However, as Kurt recollects middle school, he describes disconnectedness with the physical space of the school building and the teachers in it.

Kurt: Sixth grade. It was middle school, so it was like a whole new world. Like, all these kids. School big, so it was just like too much to do.

Rabiah: Hmm.

Kurt: That's exactly what it was. [….] if I would have been somewhere, there's one thing about me, I got a lot of potential. If I would have been somewhere, around somebody that made me focus on what was right, and showed me the actual way to do things, I would be successful right now in life at 23.

Rabiah: Was there anybody in your middle school who really stood out as far as adults are concerned? An administrator or a teacher who was really working hard to make kids stay on track? What was the attitude of most of the teachers when you were in middle school?

Kurt: I don't even—I don't remember. The only time I remember that type of teacher, teachers being active like that, is elementary.

Interestingly in this excerpt, Kurt prefaces his discussion of middle school teachers with, "I got a lot of potential." (Many of the participants in the study expressed the sentiment that they are intelligent—regardless of whether they earned a high school diploma or GED). It seemed important to Kurt that I interpret his discussion of middle school with the awareness that he is intelligent. Kurt then contemplates the impact of the school environment "if I would have been somewhere…." The suggestion is that if he had been somewhere *else*, somewhere where he had guidance, and perhaps where he had been held accountable for his schoolwork and his actions, the outcome for him would have been success. Kurt's transition from fifth grade to sixth grade marked his foray into a school

that was too “big” and “too much” as well as an environment where teachers were not able to make meaningful connections with their students. Kurt uses the word “active” to describe the type of teacher that Ms. B. was; she was a teacher who exerted herself to promote the wellbeing of her students at school. Kurt did not experience “active” teachers like Ms. B. in middle school. Another participant, Dayvon, expresses a similar pattern of reasoning in his reflections about the effect of an “active” teacher.

Dayvon I remember that lady Ms. R., my third-grade teacher, when I was going up Gilmore up the street. She used to follow me and make sure I was good until I left elementary school. She used to come in my class and make sure I was good. I was in fifth grade and she a third-grade teacher--- *Laughs*-- --

Rabiah: *Laughs*

Dayvon: --and she gonna follow me--*Laughs*

Rabiah: *Laughs*

Dayvon: Yeah, I said, “I'm all right.” *Laughs*

Rabiah: *Laughs*

Dayvon: But that was cool to me. I liked that.

Rabiah: Yeah.

Dayvon: You know what I'm saying? That means she showed—that means I was something, that I was smart like in some way. Mm-hmm

Dayvon's frequent laughter and his comment "I was in fifth grade and she a third-grade teacher," suggests that although he may have been somewhat embarrassed or surprised about his former teacher's persistent checking in on him, he was pleased about it, "But that was cool to me. I liked that." For Dayvon, her actions amounted to proof of her devotion and proof of his worth, "that means *I was something,* that *I was smart.*" Considering this last comment conversely, if Ms. R. had been in the school building and not shadowed Dayvon, it may have signaled to him that he *was nothing* and *was not smart.* Unfortunately for both Dayvon and Kurt, most of middle school was spent in juvenile detention.

DaDon's trajectory from middle school to juvenile detention began with the death of his uncle. During May of DaDon's fifth-grade year, his uncle died of cirrhosis of the liver. DaDon's violence began in sixth grade and escalated until he was sent to juvenile detention for stabbing his middle school principal through the hand with a butcher knife. Although DaDon admits that he did not inform the adults at his school about his grief, he also maintains that school officials did not interact with him under the premise that he was responding to tragic events in his life; he was not treated compassionately. DaDon contemplates the impact of his loss and the school's reaction to his behavior in the following excerpt.

DaDon: He took the place of my father, and then when he passed away, it just…. I don't know. I felt…. I don't know. So hurt. I was hurt. Yeah. That's what it was. I was hurting. I don't think I took it the right way. I was messed up [….]

Rabiah: How old were you?

DaDon: Like, 11 or 12. I was young. I was young. I was young.

Rabiah: Did the teachers at school know what happened? Did they know what was bothering you?

DaDon: Nah. No. I never told nobody. And then, it was just like everything really shifted and changed so fast. They put me in one of them classes—you feel me? Where they can put their hands on you and stuff like that. One of them type of classes, where they can restrain you and all that type stuff. One of them classes. They put me in one of them.

Rabiah: Was that still at your public school?

DaDon: Still at public school. They gave me an IEP all that—everything just changed so fast. I went from—I felt like I went from a regular person to being dictated to by everybody.

DaDon's refrain "I was young. I was young. I was young," provides an umbrella of meaning that could extend over the whole passage. The refrain comes just after DaDon recounts how much he was reeling from the death of his uncle, and it precedes his mention of the sudden onset of an educational profile that put him in classes in which he was often physically restrained. Although I prompted him to tell me how old he was, after he said that he was either 11 or 12, he evidently considered his own tenderness at that time—that he was merely a boy. Further, DaDon seems to be still emotionally processing the experience. His pleading refrain "I was young. I was young. I was young," and his repetition of phrases such as "one of *them* classes," and "changed so

fast," suggest that even now DaDon's pain over the death of his uncle, and his bewilderment over his subsequent treatment by the adults in his middle school, remain emotionally unresolved.

Formal Coursework in Juvenile Detention was Often Boring, Remedial, and Irrelevant, but Meaningful Literacy Opportunities did Exist

Federal law mandates that juvenile detention facilities provide an education to juvenile inmates who, but for their court involvement, would otherwise attend their neighborhood public schools. The age of compulsory education in the state of Maryland is now 18; however, prior to 2017, the age was lower and juvenile inmates had more options about their educational track. For most of the youth in this study, sitting in classes in juvenile detention was required. Participants, regardless of whether they received academic credit for their work completed in juvenile detention, describe their coursework as boring, remedial, and irrelevant. Others complain that the coursework coupled with the classroom experience constituted a form of oppression.

When Dayvon was incarcerated at the facility that the participants refer to as Baby Bookings, he remembers his entire tier being in class together—fifty students. In the excerpt below, Dayvon and I discuss how the teacher navigated such a staggering amount.

Rabiah: Fifty in the classroom?

Dayvon: Yes. Down at Baby Bookings, it be a lot of us in the classroom.

Rabiah: How many teachers were there?

Dayvon: One. One teacher and it would be one staff member there.

Rabiah: Wow. So, what's the teacher doing with that many students?

Dayvon: Passing out worksheets. And if you need some help, she just come around helping people, just like that. She ain't giving out no instruction, not teaching them how to do nothing. It's just – the paper in front you and if you know how to do it, do it.

Although not all participants reported such a large number of students in their classroom, and some participants reported as few as fifteen students, characterizations of the student/teacher dynamic and the quality of work are consistent. Interestingly, Dayvon's response to his teacher's approach to instruction seems to be reflected in his choice of pronouns whereby he distances himself from the experience altogether. He says "She ain't giving out no instruction, not teaching *them* how to do nothing." When I asked Dayvon about his favorite subject, he starts talking about Black History; he says that ever since elementary school when he found out about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., he wanted to learn more about the leaders in the African Diaspora. He fondly names radical leaders. I am intrigued.

Rabiah: Well, tell me about—you said you started hearing about these leaders, like Bobby Seale and Malcolm X when you were incarcerated. Tell me about that experience. Like, was it the teacher there who taught your classes?

Dayvon: No. I can say -- I can be real. I can say -- I can be real. I can say. Alright. I'm a gang member.

Rabiah: Mm-hmm.

Dayvon: I became a gang member when I was 14.

Although Dayvon hesitated before telling me that he joined a gang, he confided that the principal reason he joined was so that he could engage in the readings and discussions the gang members were having about radical leaders of the African Diaspora in general and of America in particular. Prior to this discussion with Dayvon, it had not occurred to me that a teen's motivation to join a gang could be to gain knowledge of his own history—even when such prized information is not provided in the classroom. My astonishment about the gang being a vital source of stimulating, relevant, and academic content in juvenile detention seemed to be a reaction that Dayvon anticipated, albeit abashedly. As I pursue the details with questions, he indulged me sparse comments.

Dayvon It was about the people, about the community, and that's how I learned about a lot of stuff.

Rabiah: Through the gang?

Dayvon: Yeah.

Rabiah: So, they were reading?

Dayvon: Basically.

Rabiah: Mm-hmm. And so, these were gang members you met on the inside?

Dayvon: On the inside.

Other study participants were not able to find content to distract them from the oppressive monotony of assigned classwork. For Jihad, the pace was so agonizingly slow that he could barely tolerate it.

Rabiah: Did you go to class when you stayed there?

Jihad: Yeah.

Rabiah: Yeah. […] Anything interesting you can remember as far as there being a guest speaker, a book that they introduced you to, a story, a film?

Jihad: No. The only thing --

Rabiah: No?

Jihad: —interesting is how dumb everybody was. That was interesting. That was very interesting.

Rabiah: Why?

Jihad: Because some people read like, like, "A…re-fresh-ing…smooth-ie…can…like." You want to blow your brains out listening to them.

According to Jihad, the juvenile inmates that he encountered were almost all special education candidates or recipients, and the accommodations that they needed were not provided in the one-size-fits-all learning environment of the juvenile detention facility. He too was not appropriately served as reflected in his comment, "You want to *blow your brains out* listening to them." Jihad portrays himself as a gifted student who was neither challenged nor rewarded in the classroom during juvenile detention. When I asked Jihad what he personally did to make up for his boredom in class, he told me that no resources existed in juvenile detention and that he lost his motivation to learn.

Rabiah: But it wasn't officially like a course for special ed students?

Jihad: No. It was supposed to be normal.

Rabiah: Okay.

Jihad: But like clearly everyone, like I've been in these facilities, clearly everyone that was there in that class had to be […] some type of IEP or something.

Rabiah: Did you do any studying on your own outside of class? Did you --

Jihad: Absolutely not. No.

Rabiah: No?

Jihad: No.

Rabiah: Why not? I mean, the class was boring for you. You were beyond that stuff.

Jihad: I mean, they really didn't have the materials in there for me to educate myself beyond where I was already at. And on top of that, I wasn't interested in educating myself anymore.

During his conversation with me, Jihad positions himself as the authority on the learning environment in juvenile detention. He says, "But like clearly everyone, *like I've been in these facilities,* clearly everyone that was there in that class […]." He emphasizes that his testimony is valid because of his physical presence in juvenile correctional facilities. In sum, Jihad asserts that the vacuous course material, the under-served special education students, and the under-resourced library, had a blunting effect on his intellectual curiosity. Fortunately for Jihad, when he was released from detention, he returned to his local high school and graduated at the age of 17.

Quentin found his teacher's attitude in juvenile detention more upsetting than the lack of stimulating content or lack of high-performing peers—both of which he also noted. Quentin attended class for one day and then decided to remain in his cell during class meetings. As punishment for his refusal to go to class, he was denied recreational time, phone calls, and visits, but he preferred the tedium of his cell to sitting in front of a teacher who did not care about his mind.

Quentin: You can't pay attention because the teacher doesn't really care.

Rabiah: How do you know that?

Quentin: I'm not gonna say he doesn't care, but…

Rabiah: Tell me how he acted. Like, what made you think he doesn't care? Describe that.

Quentin: He cared for us- He only cared in one way- He cared for us to stay out of trouble, but he didn't really care about our actual education, our knowledge.

Rabiah: Mm-hmm.

Quentin: He just- He wasn't- He should've been- The background checks for educational providers should've been more thorough. It should've been- it has to be- it has to be more thorough.

Quentin accuses his teacher in juvenile detention of remaining oblivious to students' need for "actual education" and "knowledge." Quentin then shifts his focus away from the

teacher and toward institutional policy to question the qualifications of teachers who apply to work with incarcerated juveniles.

DaDon tries to reconcile the needs of the students with the needs of the teachers in his analysis of the interaction between teachers and their incarcerated young students.

Rabiah: You were saying that if the teachers were in—

DaDon: a different setting

Rabiah: —that that they might be good teachers?

DaDon: Then they'd be very good teachers, but it wasn't. It was too much going on. You got a rowdy class, people barely paying attention, people barely doing their work. You doing your job, but don't no teacher want to be in a class with pupils who not really paying attention or that's not really engaging. It's not fun. It's not. You feel me?

Although DaDon tries to imagine a teacher's perspective of having to deal with "rowdy" and inattentive students, ultimately DaDon arrives at the same conclusion as Quentin, albeit less accusatorily, "but don't no teacher *want to be in a class* with pupils who not really paying attention or that's not really engaging. It's not fun. It's not." What DaDon implies, Quentin says explicitly—if the teacher is giving the impression that he or she does not want to be in the classroom with students, then the students will notice, and they will respond accordingly.

Although participants complain that attending classes and completing work in juvenile detention was often a stressful and discouraging ordeal, occasionally engaging literacy opportunities arose. Diamond, who is 18 years old and the youngest of the

participants, recalls one day in juvenile detention when his English teacher walked over to him and asked him what he was writing during her class. He showed her lyrics to a song that he was working on.

Diamond: *Laughs*—I was like, hold up. And I was like, "You want me to read it to you real quick?" I was so excited to read it to her. I read it to her and she was like this—she said, "You sleep every day. I did not know you had that in you." I was like, "I didn't either."

Rabiah: Yeah?

Diamond: And for that day forth, that's when started- stop slacking, I started picking up, doing my work,

The English teacher, who had initially approached Diamond to reprimand him for being off-task in her class, was the first adult in the carceral setting to express recognition of Diamond's linguistic talent. She then encouraged him to participate in an upcoming speech competition among the juvenile inmates.

Diamond: I was standing in front of a whole bunch of people and I got to tell my speech, and my poem, and I actually won it too, for real, this is when I was locked up, so, this wasn't too long ago.

Rabiah: Yeah?

Diamond: Yeah.

Rabiah: How was your poem?

Diamond: It was good.

Rabiah: It was good?

Diamond: Yeah, the judge got it up on the wall too.

Rabiah: Yeah?

Diamond: Mm-hmm

Rabiah: Good for you. So, was that the first time that you really feel like you wrote something successful and you presented it successfully?

Diamond: Yeah, and it was strong too.

Rabiah: Strong.

Diamond exudes pride as he recalls wining the speech contest. He maintains that he won because his work was the best. Diamond elaborates that his peers, who usually rest their heads on their desks, lifted their faces to give him their full attention because his performance was riveting. When I ask, "It was good?" He responds with the proof that "the judge got it *up on the wall too*." Diamond asserts that his interaction with the English teacher in the juvenile detention facility and his achievement in winning the speech contest, encouraged him to further develop his reading, writing, and speaking skills. He also began to schematize music differently too. It was, after all, those well-written lyrics that sparked his English teacher's faith in him.

The Interplay Between Juvenile Detention and Public High School Affected Participants' Educational Trajectories

One of the primary concerns of juvenile justice advocates is ensuring that after youth are released from correctional facilities, they are able to return to their homes and schools and embark on the trajectory of high school graduation and post-secondary

education or training. However, a theme that emerged in the data is that the schoolwork that juvenile inmates completed while they were in correctional facilities was not consistently transferred back to their public schools such that those credits could be applied to their academic records. For some students, the lack of the transfer of work—particularly after long sentences—resulted in the decision not to pursue a high school diploma. Dayvon, who was sent out of Baltimore to a juvenile correctional facility in Iowa for a full calendar year, remembers dutifully completing his academic work. When he was returned to Baltimore and went to his local public school to begin tenth grade, the school administrators informed him that because he did not have a transcript of his work from Iowa, he would have to repeat ninth grade, at the age of 16.

Rabiah: So, after you leave the juvenile detention facility and go back to your old neighborhood, and you go back to your old school?

Dayvon: That work don't mean nothing.

Rabiah: Did that work--

Dayvon: --That work don't mean nothing. That's just work you was—it couldn't mean nothing because […] I had failed because I had got locked up that whole year.

At this point during the qualitative interview, I wanted to discover more information about Dayvon's academic transition from juvenile detention back to high school. I wanted to ascertain whether his transcripts were sent from Iowa to Baltimore. Accordingly, I rephrased my questions with the intention of eliciting clarity in the answer.

Rabiah: No. I mean -- okay. So, you leave the juvie facility. You've done what you were asked to do in the classroom there--

Dayvon: Right.

Rabiah: --And then you go back to the public school. Does the paperwork, the teacher's comments, or anything follow you from juvie back to your school?

Dayvon: It couldn't have. That's what I just said.

Dayvon recalls explaining to public school officials that he dutifully attended classes in juvenile detention and that the correctional facility in Iowa must have a transcript documenting an entire freshman schoolyear worth of work, but Dayvon's efforts were not fruitful. Despite the federal obligation of juvenile correctional facilities to educate incarcerated youth, and despite the federal and ethical obligation to transfer their earned academic records, Dayvon was confronted with the prospect of repeating ninth grade because of the lack of a transferred transcript. Unaided by an adult with knowledge of the rights of students recently-released from incarceration, Dayvon dropped out of high school with feelings of frustration and defeat.

Dayvon's experience is not unique, Jeremiah, who is 19 years old, also completed coursework in juvenile detention, the transcript of which was never sent back to his public high school. Perturbed about the loss of school credit, but eager to attend school after his four-month absence, Jeremiah enrolled in a program whereby he sat in the public school classroom but he and the other students in class completed their coursework online.

Jeremiah: When I came home and none of my credits from DJS even popped up, so basically, they was saying that I was down there for three to four months not doing no work at all. So, I was like, okay. So then, I just didn't care, I just didn't try to pursue it no more.

Rabiah: So, did you go back to school after that?

Jeremiah: Yeah, I went. I was in high school. I went to high school-- I was in foster care. I got into this program called Youth Build. Where as though they paid you for going to school.

Rabiah: Youth Build?

Jeremiah: Yes ma'am. It was like an Apex. But an Apex in school type of learning system. Like, you in a school—you in a classroom, but you doing all your classroom work on a computer.

Although Jeremiah did receive credit for his Youth Build coursework, when Baltimore City abruptly halted the program, Jeremiah was not permitted to enter the traditional classroom track. In effect when the Youth Build program was terminated, Jeremiah was prohibited from continuing high school.

Diamond, who won the speech contest at the juvenile detention facility and who was inspired by his English teacher to study hard, decided to pursue the GED track while he was incarcerated in juvenile detention. He passed the English portions (Language Arts Reading and Language Arts Writing) of the GED with high marks and passed Science as well; however he did not earn sufficient scores to pass Social Studies and Math. So, in

effect, he passed half of the GED while he was in juvenile detention. Upon release, he excitedly took his GED score report back to the public schools. He was perfunctorily informed that because he had opted to pursue his GED, he was no longer eligible to take high school coursework at the public school.

Rabiah: But you said once you started in this GED program, you had made a choice that you were no longer going to be in school, but you didn't realize that?

Diamond: Yeah, I did not know-

Rabiah: So can you talk about that? Yeah?

Diamond: So when you go, when you start your GED, you, originally like- if you're home, you have to drop out of school. But since school is on- in detention- is on the schedule, that's what y'all have to do when you wake up. You have to wake up, do hygiene, and go to school, then go to lunch, then go back to school. Since you had to do that- I couldn't- I didn't know I was dropping myself out of school because the GED because I was still, I was still doing school work on top of my GED. […] I just didn't know I was gonna be dropped out, because I tried to go to North Avenue like, "I'm trying to get back into school." They like, "You doing your GED."

The lack of clear choices presented to Diamond while he was incarcerated in juvenile detention detracted from his ability to make an informed decision regarding his

academic path. Diamond realizes that since he is no longer eligible to attend public high school, he must, necessarily finish his GED in order to demonstrate high school equivalency. Although he does not think that he can afford GED preparation courses and he is not sure that he knows how to review the materials by himself, he remains confident that he will find a way. Without institutional guidance and without monetary assistance, the responsibility of finishing his high school education is now Diamond's alone.

Emergent Themes Corresponding to the Second Research Question

My second research question asks: How do participants interpret the role of literacy in their academic, economic, and social lives? In accordance with the themes emerging from the narrative data of participants, they interpret the role of literacy in four main ways including: a) traditional literacy skills demarcate people into discrete categories, b) literacy skills are useful only insofar as they promote employment, c) literacy can involve reflective and cathartic practices d) literacy can promotes liberation and transformation of society.

Traditional Literacy Skills Demarcate People into Discrete Types

Tony, who does not consider himself functionally literate, conceptualizes traditional literacy as a domain that is reserved for those who inherit society's boons. To Tony, literacy is dichotomized. Those with compromised brain health and low socio-economic status are in one domain; those with robust brain health and comfortable socio-economic status are in another. Tony, who has lead poisoning and ADHD, proclaims early in the interview, "as far as any writing about stories or stories getting told to me, I was never in that category." His use of the word *category* strongly indicates the dichotomized view that Tony has of literacy skills—particularly reading and writing. He

also announces, “I don’t write and do none of that stuff.” Tony does not have a high school diploma or a GED, and he does not consider earning either of them a feasible undertaking. He does not recall a time in his life in which he was successful in any literacy-related academic task. Even while reminiscing about elementary school, which he considers the most joyous time of his life, Tony confides that he cheated often because he did not consider himself capable of doing the work.

Tony: And how I got through school and passing and grades and all that, pshh, to tell you the truth, I really don’t even know because most of the time, shit, I was either cheating, or going behind teachers’ desks getting the guides, the gradebook, and putting grades or changing it up. So as far as—my classes never went well--

Rabiah: Yeah?

Tony: --never.

Although other participants discuss diagnoses that placed them in special education, Tony’s description of the dichotomized spheres of literacy, as determined in part by brain health, suggest that for urban schoolchildren who have been affected by environmental toxins, the traditional pathways of access to education in general, and literacy in particular, may not be available in Baltimore City Public Schools.

Literacy Skills are Useful only Insofar as They Promote Employment

A few participants express that literacy, when seemingly conceptualized as a school-related phenomenon, is useful only insofar as it can contribute to the acquisition

of gainful employment or social mobility. Otherwise, honing literacy skills or pursuing school is not worth the demands on time and energy. Tom, for example, expresses the view that when he was a teenager diagnosed with bipolar disorder, he was interested in becoming a psychologist who could counsel youth to better mental health. Tom says, "I just feel like understanding people and stuff, like I told you, like it's a good way because you know psychology teaches you all about like body language and all that too […] to communicate with people better." Tom, who consumed prescribed psychotropic medications, does not consider medication the solution to most mental health challenges—particularly when not accompanied by effective counseling. However, now Tom deems the path to a degree in psychology excessively long and cumbersome. So, although he cherishes the idea of being able to further develop and utilize his speaking skills in a way that contributes to the mental health of his community, he cannot imagine spending hours out of each work week reading and writing. Rather, Tom plans to go to vocational school for a certification because he has bills that he needs to pay in order to survive. Tom asserts,

> I don't wanna waste time […]. I was thinking about getting a trade in welding or something 'cause I wanted to do something that wouldn't take too long, for me going to school and I would be able to start making money like right away, and it would be like fair pay right away.

Tom, who spent a third of his life in correctional facilities, is an avid reader. He perused many different genres of literature on lock-up. His favorite books were about "Black revolutionary people," but he would also read urban fiction, popular novels, and anything he could get his hands on. Now, the reality of needing to

make money in order to afford a place to live, makes reading and concerted study, whether for leisure or for a university degree, feel like a luxury that he cannot afford. Similarly, Jihad, who dropped out the aviation mechanics program at community college, realizes that with only a high school diploma, his career options are limited.

Jihad: Well, seeing as how I have no education to speak of, I'm not prepared for anything. That's why I'm going to make a job for myself. I'm going to be -- I want to be -- I want to own my own business.

Rabiah: Doing what?

Jihad: Real estate.

Rabiah: Yeah?

Jihad: Mm-hmm.

As noted in the excerpt above, Jihad does not consider his high school diploma an adequate education for gainful employment. He says, "I'm not prepared for anything." However, he decides that he will use his writing skills to "make a job," which begins with drafting a business plan.

Jihad: I started writing a business plan. Like I said, I can write. I just don't like doing it, you know.

Rabiah: Mm-hmm.

Jihad: I started writing a business plan. I'm halfway done. I tell people that. That's the biggest accomplishment of my life so far.

Rabiah: Is to write a business plan?

Jihad: Yeah, to write a business plan. I never thought I'd be doing anything Gucci like that, so --

Rabiah: Yeah?

Jihad: So, I'm almost done with that.

Jihad considers the business plan one of the "biggest accomplishments" of his life. He describes the endeavor as *Gucci*—apparently a reference to the brand, which is expensive and is therefore only purchased by the wealthiest members of society. Jihad insists that he has begun the writing project for the sole purpose of the monetary gain that he plans to amass after the business has been launched. He is driven by the prospect that his writing will ultimately yield monetary results.

Literacy can Involve Reflective and Cathartic Practices

For some study participants, writing and speaking in particular, promote cathartic opportunities for metacognition and self-improvement. DaDon began a diary in elementary school and learned to use his journals to reflect on his life experiences. His journal became increasingly important to him, especially during middle and high school years, most of which he spent in correctional facilities and group homes. DaDon says, "Middle school. Writing in my journal. That's when I really found a different outlet. My journal. Just writing and reading, just venting to myself, that type of thing." Interestingly, DaDon does not limit his journal to a place in which only writing took place. Rather, he uses his journal for writing and *for reading* because he reads his journal entries and reflects on what he has read. Because of the violence for which DaDon was responsible, he was separated from his family from sixth grade through twelfth grade; his

journal evolved into a close companion. Now that he is 23 years old, he has journals chronicling over a decade of his life. His best friend tells him that maybe he could publish an autobiography with the use of his journals as fodder, but for DaDon, the journals have always been a means of reading, writing, and reflection. He is not sure that he wants to commercialize their content—even for monetary gain.

Rabiah: Do you still write in a journal?

DaDon: Yeah, I still write in a journal. Now I got a box of journals.

Rabiah: *Laughs*

DaDon: A small box of journals. Black and white composition--

Rabiah: Are you making a book of your own?

DaDon: Nah. I don't know. Everybody keeps telling me that, like my best friend. She like, "make a book. Just put all of them together and let somebody edit them."

Rabiah: But it's personal?

DaDon: It's real personal.

For Ralph the practice of writing and speaking is also cathartic, but his journey and motivation is distinct from DaDon's. Ralph was in special education coursework in his early years of school. Traditional literacy skills were not easy for him; however, in the adult facility when receiving treatment for his addiction, he was required to write about his life choices.

Ralph: When I did get arrested, I had to write a life story as far as what really—what problems in my life led up to me using, as far as my addiction.

Rabiah: Is this the first time you really wrote something?

Ralph: Yes. Yes ma'am. And it really helped me. It helped out a lot because I'd never done it before. So, to actually go back and read about my life, how I put it in my own words and feel the emotions again, to see them on paper, I felt some type of way. I knew I didn't want that life no more, as far as struggling and making wrong decisions. So, inside, inside the biography, I wrote goals and things that I wanted to do when I came home from prison. I actually shared it in front of a lot of people. I actually had to get up and read it in front of a lot of people.

Rabiah: In the facility?

Ralph: Yes ma'am.

Interestingly, Ralph too reflects on the writing process as also involving reading and metacognition. Ralph explains that seeing his own feelings expressed in words on paper and *reading* about his own life, inspired him to want to change. His narratives were well received. Ralph's respect for his own intellect blossomed as he engaged with audiences. At 28 years old, he earned his GED in prison. Now, he participates regularly in community work entails him speaking to juvenile offenders inside and outside of the carceral setting. He continues to write and read his speeches, and he confides that he is becoming a better extemporaneous speaker as the years go by. If his plans to join the army are not successful, Ralph intends to manage a half-way house in which he will

counsel young adults emerging from incarceration who need someone to talk to who can relate to their experiences.

Literacy Can Promote Liberation and Transformation of Society

Reflective writing, purposeful reading, inspired speaking, and attentive listening can culminate in the ability to actively engage the world in ways that liberate and transform. DaDon exemplifies this application of literacy. DaDon coordinates his various literacy skills in savvy ways that empower his community. First, DaDon regularly volunteers at the Boys and Girls Club.

> DaDon: I do a lot of outreach now with the kids and with people that work down—as a matter fact they actually people that work down juvenile justice system-- Brother Carlos and them people like that. They run the Boys and Girls Club down there. I go around with them and speak to other youths.

He says that he puts a lot of thought into what he will say to them every time. He asks them questions about their lives and poses questions to them. On occasion, he speaks to them about his own life choices, but he does not topicalize the mistakes he made in his pre-adolescence through early adulthood often. Rather, he interacts with young people conversationally and responds in accordance with their maturity and their interests. DaDon perceives these community conversations integral to letting youth know that they have African American men in their lives who can serve as mentors and guides. DaDon insists that his volunteer work is nothing short of what most men should demand of themselves.

He shrugs when he humbly says that he's "Giving back to them, just like mentoring them for real, that's all. Being more engaged with them." However, his eyes dance as he describes his other engagement with Baltimore City's children—the Baltimore Marching Bands. He says, "So all the community bands all over Baltimore City, East, West, South Baltimore, wherever, I'm the person that they come to. All the kids […] It's something that, you feel me, I take pride into." DaDon excitedly tells me that through his work with the marching bands, he sees children concentrate their bodies and minds on something positive—marching. The children perform in parades and travel the country. DaDon proudly notes that the marching bands travel to over 36 states each year, and that he strives to make sure that each child leaves Baltimore to see another state at least once a year. When he interacts with the children in the marching bands, the talk is not just about life choices—it is much more exciting than that. They are talking about the marching, the parades, the drums, and traveling throughout the country. For DaDon, such experiences are owed every American child, and he is intent on making sure that he brings his skills—literacy and otherwise—to the fore so that his three young children are able to inherit a world transformed, in part, by their father.

Thus, the four different ways in which participants in this study perceive and practice literacy seem to emerge on a continuum. Literacy, in its most rudimentary conceptualization is nothing more than a rigid set of standards that prevents people of limited cognitive and material resources from accessing the wealth of society. Next, literacy is the means by which one can acquire the

credentials necessary to earn a living. Further, literacy can promote cathartic metacognitive behavior and encourage meaningful connections with others. However, in its most transcendent form, literacy involves the ability to transform the lives of others in powerful and indelible ways.

Emergent Themes Corresponding to the Third Research Question

My third research question asks: What does the narrative data of participants reveal about their formal and informal discourse patterns through the lens of the Multiliteracies framework? The Multiliteracies framework acknowledges that literacy skills are forged, and thereafter inseparable from, a particular culture and context. The framework also nods to the essentiality of meaning making that stems from and arises in multimodal forms. However, flexible, evolving definitions of literacy that nod to cultural context, claim to validate non-standard language varieties, and claim to appreciate the incursion of technological devices—has stopped short of permitting students like Tony from thinking and feeling that he is literate at all. However, as I expressed in my Methods section, I consider African American schoolboys under pedagogical assault. So too, do I consider African American Vernacular English (AAVE) as it is spoken in the homes of almost 80% of African American families across the continental United States, a valid and beautiful form of English. It is therefore with these premises that I examined Tony's narrative for what I sensed to be true as I listened to the lyrical cadence of his voice and repeatedly found myself in a rhapsody as he told me one perfectly-constructed narrative after another about his life. I have selected what I consider Tony's best narrative to include here in full, such that it is not interrupted, and therefore fractured, by my examination. Please indulge the inclusion of this four-page narrative; this paper is a

phenomenology and I therefore refuse to relegate my participants' words to the appendices—especially in this case. Tony narrates,

> When I first experienced the juvenile system, I was thirteen years old. And how I had got involved in that, I was over Hampton one day across the bridge. We always called it the White people's section because we was young and when we went over that way, we crossed over the bridge, there was nothing but a bunch of White people. So, one day we was over there, and every time we go over there, like, they got all nice trick bikes. They got good cars. They got all type of shit everywhere, and you just be looking like, "damn, you ever like—why the fuck we don't got no type of stuff like this? Or "God-damn, I wants shit like this." But we already knew we wasn't gonna get it because we knew the situation that was going on. And to make a long story short, we went over there to steal some bikes one day because we liked their bikes and our bikes, they was always broke up, chains popping and crazy stuff. So, we went over there one day and we was going to hit this garage or whatever. It had nothing but bikes in there, man. We sat there and we watched the man for a whole hour straight until he left and went. We was in the back alley. So, we had two people at the corner watching the alley and everyone else was at the garage We had some bolt cutters. As we started to break into the garage, cutting the bolts, make a long story short, you know other people be in the neighborhood and watching out for other people too. The lady came outside like, "hey, what y'all doing?" You feel me? So, we like, "ma'am

we live here. We tryin' to get in our garage." So, she like, "man you don't live there." You feel me? "I know who live there. I never seen y'all faces. Why y'all got bolt cutters?" We like, "miss, just go back in the house, miss." You feel me? To make a long story short as we back there and we continue to cut through the bolts, we so little. But we not strong because we so little. We trying to cut this thick-ass lock. We got to take turns. He got to try to cut through it about medium. He got to go next, and then he got to go next til it cut through. Probably 10 or 15 minutes go past before we get the first lock off. And we still got another, a second lock, and we like God-damn. We little, so we all scared and nervous and shit. We don't know what gonna occur. We gonna get the bikes? We gonna make it out? Make it home? What? You feel me? Me, I already know every time we do something, something crazy happens or we get involved with the police. So, I'm like, "man I'm ready to leave." You feel me? No time. But that's what I'm saying? And I'm tryin' to leave to go see where my brother at because he was watchin' the corner and shit. And I see him coming down the street and he haul-ass slow. I'm like "bro what's going on?" He like, "time out coming down the street." You feel me? So, when I jump off the curb into the street, I see the police coming down. I had to turn around and get to movin'. But my brother already gone. He done hit the alley or whatever. So, I'm coming behind him in the alley and I'm yellin' out, probably a block away, "the police coming!" You feel me? "Get out of there!" You feel me? Like, as I'm

coming down the alley and everybody jumping back on their bikes and all that, I'm tryin' to shoot through the hole and I crash into three people and wipes out. So, the police happen to hop out and they get to chasing us. To make a long story short, we got like four bikes and four of us is on feet. It was probably like, ten people all together. Four of us is on feet, six still on bikes. As we movin' and travelin' back through the alleys to get back to our neighborhood, the police—they constantly coming from different splits, like everywhere, we don't know what to do--what to do. Make a long story short, as we coming across the bridge where separate us from the White and the Black section. As we comin' across the bridge, man, damn, we'd of got back. We could of made it. We'd of been good, but as we come across the bridge, the police is now coming in cars back to back. Back to back. We coming from over Druid Hill Park way over there. So, as we get about halfway to the bridge, they must of called for some other units, so they came the other way and we ain't even know they boxed the bridge off. So now, we going back and forth, back and forth, back. The police car, they actually catching us, but we ain't trying' to give up. We like, man. They got us man. They beat us up, man. They whipped us all. Every last one of us. Throw us in the back of the police wagon or whatever, man. So as we goin' down to juvie, I don't even know nothing about the juvenile system. I keep thinking, I'm goin' to jail. Like, a real prison. I'm cryin' in the back. Everybody cryin' but we like, we gotta be strong, man. You feel me? By the time we get down there to the juvenile

> system, they processed me and all that, man. Put me in there, whatever. And when I first got in there—they make you take off your shoes, your clothes, all this type of shit, man. And there be other men, people right there and all that shit, man. You be like, "man what's goin' on?" You feel me? And you can't do nothing because—but we didn't know this, I didn't know this, but after they did that, stripped us down, made sure we didn't have no contraband, they put us in a cell. We stayed in the cell for probably like—I say probably eight to ten hours, just sittin' there waiting to see what they gonna say, we can go home? Our mothers can come and pick us up or what? Probably around 12 o'clock probably that night, my mother finally popped up and came and got us. It was so crazy sitting in that cell even though I was still with my brothers, my friends and all that. And another thing, probably two people be in a cell together so they had split us all up or whatever. Some would be around the corner, we'll be around there. But they never put no other people from no different or other neighborhoods in there with us or none of that. And then after that—that first time I went—after that juvenile, that was my home then because I was catching charges constantly back to back.

Tony's narration of the circumstances leading to his arrest comports with every standard for well-constructed narratives. I have chosen to use William Labov and Waletzky's Narrative Model (1967) with which to explore Tony's narrative. According to Labov and Waletzky (1967), the first component of a well-constructed narrative is what they refer to as the Abstract, in which the storyteller familiarizes the audience with the significance of

the story. Tony's Abstract is his opening line, "When I first experienced the juvenile system, I was thirteen years old." The second stage of the model is the Orientation, which provides the setting, characters, and the initial actions. Tony says, "I was over Hampton one day across the bridge. We always called it the White people's section because […] there was nothing but a bunch of White people." At this point, the listeners can imagine Tony, a 13-year-old Black boy and his friends from the poor side of town traveling *"across the bridge"* to the White people's section—thus Tony provides the setting and a few characters. As for the initial actions of the Orientation, Tony says, "we went over there to steal some bikes one day because we liked their bikes and our bikes, they was always broke up, chains popping and crazy stuff." The third stage in Labov and Waletzky's (1967) model is the Complication, in which the events that began in the Orientation take a turn for the worse and a crisis arises. Tony says, "As we started to break into the garage, cutting the bolts, make a long story short, you know other people be in the neighborhood and watching out for other people too." A neighbor curious about whether she is observing a robbery, comes out of her house to confront the young teens. Tony adds some humor to the story (which is not stipulated by Labov and Waletzky's model). Tony declares, "ma'am *we live* here. We tryin to get in *our garage*." As Tony tells this part of the story, his eyes shine with mirth, and he shakes his head. The fourth stage in Labov in Waletzky's model is Evaluation in which the narrator provides some reflection on what is occurring in the story. This requires the narrator to temporarily step outside of the narrative chain of events and provide commentary about them. Tony, as if on cue, provides the Evaluation, "We little, so we all scared and nervous and shit. We don't know what gonna occur. We gonna get the bikes? We gonna make it out? Make it

home? What? You feel me? Me, I already know every time we do something, *something crazy happens* or we get involved with the police." The fifth stage of the model is Resolution in which the crisis is resolved, and a sense of normalcy returns. Tony says, "Probably around 12 o'clock probably that night, my mother finally popped up and came and got us." Thus, Tony communicates that the crises are over—the arrest, strip search, and subsequent detention—and he and his friends are heading home. The sixth stage of Labov and Waletzky's (1967) model is referred to as the Coda, in which the narrator returns to the Abstract to provide closure to the story. Accordingly, Tony says, "And then after that—that first time I went—after that juvenile, that was my home then because I was catching charges constantly back to back." Thus Tony provides the Coda and signals to the audience that his narrative has ended. Tony's story-telling skills are in exact accordance with Labov and Waletzky's Narrative Model (1967). Further, Tony's use of humor, foreshadowing, and dialogue, enrich the listener's enjoyment of the story. If Labov and Waletzky were Tony's teachers, they would have pronounced him not only literate, but a truly gifted narrator. In the following chapter, I discuss the implications of the findings for research and practice as well as the study's limitations.

The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on "authority" are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it. Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other.
—Paulo Freire

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The primary findings that arose from my exploration of the narratives provided by 12 African American men between the ages of 18 and 30 who experienced incarceration in juvenile detention facilities acknowledged the role shared by home and school environments in creating foundational literacy, the need for emotional and academic infrastructure in middle schools, the blunting effect of unstimulating coursework on the psyche and behavior of juvenile inmates, the lack of coordination between institutions responsible for academic records, and participants' perception of the role of literacy in high school completion, post-secondary education, gainful employment, and transformative participation in the community. In this chapter, I have distilled salient findings into five implications that educators in juvenile detention facilities, public schools, community colleges, and universities can consider. I present a trans-institutional and multi-faceted approach to maximizing the literacy potential of African American youth during and after incarceration. Accordingly, this chapter discusses the following implications emergent from my results: a) juvenile detention facilities and public schools must collaborate, b) juvenile detention facilities must offer relevant, engaging, and differentiated curricula, c) public middle schools and high schools must have re-entry coordinators, d) community colleges need academic advisers who are sensitive to the

needs of students re-entering society, and e) university-sponsored teacher preparation programs should offer a specialization in teaching incarcerated youth.

Juvenile Detention Facilities and Public Schools Must Collaborate

Juvenile detention facilities do not consistently send the transcripts of released inmates back to their public middle and high schools for inclusion in students' academic records. Such lack of coordination between institutions responsible for positively contributing to the socio-academic futures of adolescents causes devastating social and academic setbacks for those who aspire to earn high school diplomas. For African American male students in urban neighborhoods, the consequences arising from the lack of provision of academic transcripts, such as grade demotion and other academic rebuffs, compound their vulnerability and diminish the likelihood that they will return to high school.

Further, teachers must apprise youth, while they are in the carceral setting, of the ramifications of the academic choices they confront—before they make those choices. For example, juvenile inmates who decide to embark on the GED track instead of or in addition to regular classes, must be informed that upon release from the correctional facility, they are no longer eligible to enroll in public high school. Any other programs offered in juvenile detention centers or public schools that present an alternative route to high school graduation, but effectively disqualify students from future re-enrollment in high school, necessitate that students are well informed.

Juvenile Detention Facilities Must Offer Relevant, Engaging, and Differentiated Curricula

Juvenile detention facilities structure classes as an integral part of the daily regimen. Detained students necessarily attend classes punctually and regularly; therefore, teachers have the propitious opportunity to introduce thought-provoking content that sparks the curiosity, promotes the confidence, and stirs the creative capacities of all students. The coursework can be meaningful. Participants in the present study indicated that they deeply enjoy Black history. Why not have a sequence of cross-disciplinary units that centralize African American male figures—including Lewis Howard Latimer, David Walker, Nat Turner, Paul Laurence Dunbar, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, and Malcolm X—to name a few? What better way to nourish and invigorate the spirits of young incarcerated students than to provide them with a strong connection to their identity?

In addition to relevant and engaging content, juvenile inmates need differentiation in the classroom just as they are entitled to it in their public schools. Remedial work for everyone does not stand in place of differentiation. Worksheets, particularly in juvenile detention, should be used sparingly regardless of students' academic ability. When worksheets are distributed, that can happen in tandem with stimulating content. Further, differentiation that permits incarcerated students to display knowledge in a variety of expressive, interactive, and competitive ways, can give students the opportunity to perceive themselves and their educational experience as valuable.

Improvements in detention center curricula may also diminish boredom-related misbehavior that can manifest itself in myriad ways among incarcerated students.

Boredom and idle-mindedness, even in the best of circumstances, can produce aggressive and antisocial behavior. Boredom is a brutally-active force. Boredom afflicts. Students who are engaged in their learning experience and who think that their teachers appreciate their intellects have less inclination to misbehave. Moreover, when juvenile inmates know that their academic work is earning credits that will transfer back to the public schools that they plan to attend after serving their sentences, they can feel the satisfaction that their active engagement in class also amounts to academic credit.

Public Middle Schools and High Schools Must Have Re-Entry Coordinators

According to Eddie Ellis, the peer reviewer for this study, public schools do not have special divisions in their offices of academic counseling or otherwise, that work specifically with students returning to school from incarceration. Therefore, by training administrators to be re-entry coordinators, such individuals, sensitized to the needs of this population, can advocate for the socio-academic success of the students. For example, the re-entry coordinator would understand that many students returning from incarceration need to meet with parole and probation officers, which in turn interferes with students' ability to accommodate school arrival and departure times. The re-entry coordinator would work with students and teachers to ensure that students' needs to visit parole and probation officers does not result in reports of truancy. Similarly, the re-entry coordinator could assist students in obtaining transcripts from correctional facilities, calculating their academic credits, considering their college choices, and consciously navigating in-school circumstances that may have contributed to their incarceration. Such re-entry coordinators would be poised to have a vital role in the successful

integration of students returning to their middle schools and high schools from incarceration after months, and sometimes years, of absence.

Community Colleges Need Academic Advisers Sensitive to the Needs of Students Re-Entering Society

Community colleges should equip advising offices with individuals who understand the constraints faced by court-involved young adults. Such advisers could assist students wearing GPS devices and in group homes on curfew with designing pragmatically-tenable schedules. Advisers could also assist students with choosing their fields of study, modifying their schedules during add/drop periods, and filling out paperwork for opportunities such as academic clemency, work study, and study abroad.

Additionally, community colleges could develop informational videos designed specifically to address the concerns and needs of young people from the carceral setting. These videos could highlight available resources, such as the writing and mathematics labs on campus that offer free tutoring. Videos could explain campus disability support services—such that students understand that an inability to read (caused by lead poisoning, ADHD, blindness or otherwise) does not constitute a reason not to attend college; students are entitled access to textbooks by use of a reader or audio recording. Similarly, students who have difficulty with the physical demand of writing can have access to scribes and software programs that take dictation. Because such prized information is not easily accessible, formerly-incarcerated youth may feel inclined to consider college too overwhelming to navigate, out of their league, or a colossal waste of time.

University-Sponsored Teacher Preparation Programs Should Offer a Specialization in Teaching Incarcerated Youth

Opportunities for educators in the juvenile detention setting to receive professional development directly related to the population they serve are scant. The National Partnership for Juvenile Services (NPJS) in partnership with like-minded organizations provides an annual conference in which educators and staff in juvenile detention facilities can share best practices and current research in the field. Further, the NPJS website offers several videos (averaging 10 minutes in duration) of experts from the field discussing issues such as managing mixed-ability classrooms. However, no tertiary institution currently offers certification or degree programs specifically designed for preparing educators to work in juvenile detention facilities.

Colleges and universities that offer teacher preparation programs, particularly in urban communities, must offer training for teachers that prepares them for the demands particular to the detention environment. Special education certification, one may argue, is sufficient because of the disproportionately high number of special education students incarcerated. However, special education coursework does not prepare teachers to instruct students behind bars, regardless of the ratio of special education students in the class. A certification in urban education is similarly insufficient. Teachers who seek employment in juvenile detention facilities must understand for example: the types of behaviors that are criminalized and result in the detention of children, the impact of pervasive and proximal violence on the psychological development of children, the academic concerns specific to incarcerated inmates, the safety concerns specific to

incarcerated inmates, and the shame and stigmatization that youth may feel during and after incarceration.

One may argue that offering a certification or degree track to prepare teachers to work in the carceral setting is tantamount to complicity in the prison industrial complex and the manifold dimensions of oppression that it entails. Further, that to develop such an academic or professional credential, incentivizes the existence of schools in juvenile detention. While such suspicion or skepticism may be warranted, thousands of youth—disproportionately African American and male—experience education in detention centers on a daily basis with teachers who are unprepared to perform their jobs well. Does not the absence of teacher training constitute a form of complicity? Currently, the two qualifications for working in juvenile detention facilities usually include 1) a state-issued teaching certification, and 2) a background report that indicates the applicant has not been convicted of felonies or suspected of the mistreatment of children.

Instructors of incarcerated youth necessarily venture behind bars, into the panoptic space replete with the accoutrements and acoustics of punishment, encounter youth whose crimes range from joyriding to manslaughter, and whose feet may be shackled to the floor during class. Teachers of incarcerated youth will observe them shouting, screaming, weeping, despairing, and reflecting. Detained youth have experienced personal and vicarious violence. They are experiencing shame and regret. And they are teenagers. The range of age, emotional maturity, and academic ability that teachers will encounter in the classroom is vast and unpredictable. Therefore, in consideration of the magnitude of the professional responsibility of teachers of incarcerated youth, it is unethical, it is unconscionable, and it is unreasonable to send

unprepared teachers to work. Universities have an obligation to do what they do best—educate. After all, prioritizing the preparation of teachers responsible for educating juvenile offenders improves the likelihood that teachers and juvenile inmates will be successful in the classroom.

The five above-mentioned implications are related to the improvement of practice. However, it is worth noting that changes to practice in the field of carceral education for juveniles must be accompanied by rigorous research. More information pertaining to the intellectual, emotional, and physical welfare of incarcerated and recently-released youth necessitates qualitative interviews with the youth themselves and the adults responsible for them. By ascertaining the experiences and perspectives of all stakeholders, researches can more efficaciously recognize the ways to improve the lives and education of incarcerated schoolchildren (and schoolchildren at risk of incarceration or recidivism).

An example of a worthwhile study regarding the aforementioned implication that *university-sponsored teacher preparation programs should offer a specialization in teaching incarcerated youth,* could include a qualitative study in which teachers in their first or second year of working in the juvenile detention setting discuss their consideration of whether they felt adequately prepared. Similarly, teachers could discuss mistakes that they made or observed of their colleagues in juvenile detention facilities that could have been avoided with training. Such data could deeply inform the design of teacher preparation programs capable of equipping teachers with the knowledge and disposition for working with schoolchildren behind bars.

Limitations

The most apparent limitation for this study on formerly-incarcerated African American young men between 18 and 30 years of age is that for some participants the juvenile confinement experience occurred several years prior to the interviews conducted for this study. Thus, for some participants, the interview elicited predominately retrospective data, while for other participants, the carceral experience in their juvenile years was just a month or two before the interview. However, for all participants the recollection of time detained during childhood was stark and emotionally-laden.

A second limitation for the study is that it does not include African American male youth outside of Baltimore. Even if the lived experiences of Baltimore City youth can be said to represent those of urban youth in general, the study participants certainly do not have the same world views, circumstances, concerns, and experiences of their peers from suburban and rural areas. Interviews with suburban African American male youth, in particular, because of their socio-economic privilege, would probably yield different findings and implications.

A third limitation of the present study is that the phenomenological design, while focusing on the narratives of participants, did not encompass the first-hand perspectives of other stakeholders such as parents, teachers, counselors, lawyers, police officers, and judges. In order to further develop implications for policies and practices that can best serve detained and recently-released African American male youth, some consideration is necessarily due to the views of respective stakeholders.

Conclusion

When I first conceptualized the present study, I was expecting for participants to speak concertedly to me about their literacy experiences. I anticipated that participant recollections of reading, writing, speaking, and listening before, during, and after detainment would comprise the bulk of my interview data. So too I expected for participants to speak not only in African American Vernacular English (AAVE) but *about* it as well. My experience of teaching a linguistics course in a juvenile detention facility during afterschool hours to African American male youth in 2011 formed the basis of my expectations for the qualitative interviews of the present study. However, the one-on-one interviews I conducted lasting as long as two hours, jarred and humbled me. The participants perceived me as a friend, a confidant, and a possible therapist, despite my pedantic disclosures during the informed consent process that preceded each respective interview for nearly 15 minutes.

Participants detailed their bewilderment in juvenile detention and their brutal victimization in prison, the circumstances of their own acts of violence, the elusiveness of sanity after long periods of solitary confinement, the inefficacy of psychiatric medication when counseling is perfunctory, the painful throbbing of raw and unresolved grief over the loss of loved ones, the palpable reminiscence of teachers and mentors who inspired them, and their wistful, restless pursuit of life's meaning. They lifted up their shirts and rolled up their pantlegs to show me keloid scars of stab wounds and bullet holes. Sometimes they wept. They described the significance of the tattoos that decorated their bodies. They opened their cell phones and showed me videos of their toddlers lisping songs. They flipped through pictures of themselves in cap and gown on high school

graduation day. With quiet pride they logged into community college sites and showed me active transcripts. They told me what haunted them, and they told me what they wanted most in life. I was repeatedly overwhelmed. And yet, they refreshed my sense of purpose. They inspired me to ask questions. They revealed hypocrisy, negligence, and cruelties meted out by the adults in charge of their care in group homes, carceral institutions, and public schools. They told me what prison is like when you are sixteen and the judicial system has removed your juvenile status. Perhaps they answered my questions about literacy as best they could, but more importantly, they told me the stories in their hearts. Their fierce and implacable insistence on truth ensured that the present phenomenological study is imbued with the meaning that they intimated. Indeed, the study participants have reaffirmed my belief that the challenges facing African American male youth who are arrested and incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities are complex and manifold. However, educators and policy makers have no right to be daunted by these challenges. Through additional qualitative research, far beyond the scope of the present study, we can achieve solutions. If enough stakeholders embark on the intellectual, academic, emotional, and physical preservation of African American schoolboys, we can collectively perform what Freire refers to as “an act of love.”

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. a) What is your earliest memory of reading or hearing a story? b) What about writing or telling a story?

2. What was school like before you experienced incarceration as a juvenile?

3. a) How were you provided an education while you were incarcerated as a juvenile? b) Was the education different from what you experienced in school before? Explain.

4. a) Think back to when you were behind bars as a juvenile - describe a typical day from the time you woke up until the time you went to bed? b) What were the spaces in which you were able to speak or interact freely with others while you were incarcerated?

5. When you were released, did you go back to public school? If so, why did you return to and what was it like to go back? If not, why not?

6. I'd like to ask you a short set of questions about reading, writing, and speaking.
    a) Do you like to read? If so, what do you like to read? If not, why not? Do you think that your reading habits affected how you did in school? Explain.
    b) Do you like to write? If so, what do you like to write? If not, why not? Do you think that your writing habits affected how you did in school? Explain.
    c) Do you consider yourself a good speaker? Why or why not?

7. a) Describe the jobs you think your education prepared you for? b) Do you want to acquire more education? Explain.

8. a) Is there anything else you would like to share about your school experiences, books, songs, or speaking style? b) Is there anything else that you think I should have asked you that you would like to discuss with me now?

Appendix B:

Johns Hopkins University
Homewood Institutional Review Board (HIRB)
Informed Consent Form

Title: Literacy in the Lives of African-American Males Who Experienced Incarceration as

Juveniles

Principal Investigator: Dr. Norma Day-Vines

Date: May 10, 2018

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH STUDY:

- The purpose of this research study is to learn about the literacy perspectives and patterns of African American males who experienced incarceration before reaching adulthood. The researcher seeks to understand the educational experiences that African American male youth received behind bars and in their public schools. Perhaps with this information, teachers and policymakers can improve learning conditions for youth inside and outside of detention.
- We anticipate that approximately 12 people will participate in this study.

PROCEDURES:

- For this study, participants will be asked a few questions and expected to speak freely in response to the questions. Participants should feel welcome to provide examples, recall experiences, and express their hopes, disappointments, and frustrations. At times, the researcher may ask participants if they are willing to view an image or two that is relevant to the question asked, but the participants can feel free to decline viewing the images.
- Only one session is set aside for each participant. The time expected for the session is 90 minutes; however, participants can leave at any time during those 90 minutes if they feel uncomfortable, unable, or unwilling to continue talking.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:

- The whole interview session will be audio recorded. If a participant decides that he is not comfortable with audio recording at any time during the interview, the audio recorder will be turned off.
- Each audio recording will be converted into a written document within a few days of the interview. These recordings will be under lock and key. The written document will not include any information that can reveal the identity of participants. All names will be fake. All dates will be fake. The use of fake information will ensure that no one reading the published research will be able to identify participants.
- Participants are asked not to discuss any information that could be used to prosecute them or anyone else for a crime. Participants are also asked not to discuss any plans

to harm self or others. If a participant reveals such information, the researcher will need to report it to law enforcement

- Participants are welcome to end the interview at any time if they feel uncomfortable with it.
- If participants are saddened or upset by the discussion or by the memories they recall during the interview, the researcher can refer them to counselling services and community resources nearby. Participants should also keep in mind that they can end the interview when they are ready to do so without losing any monetary compensation. The researcher will also remind participants of this option during the interview if they show signs of emotional fatigue.

BENEFITS:

- Participants can benefit from this study by having the opportunity to discuss their ideas about literacy and language and the effect of public education on their lives inside and outside of detention. The researcher considers their voices valuable and their stories valuable.
- The ideas expressed by participants in this study will provide much-needed information to teachers and policymakers who want to improve teaching practices for African American schoolchildren inside and outside of detention.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:

- Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary: You choose whether to participate. If you decide not to participate, there are no penalties, and you will not lose any benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. If you choose to participate in the study, you can stop your participation at any time, without any penalty or loss of benefits. If you want to withdraw from the study, please feel free to ask the researcher to turn off the audio recorder and end the interview.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

- Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the Johns Hopkins University Homewood Institutional Review Board and officials from government agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the Office for Human Research Protections. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.) Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.
- A Transcriptionist will convert the audio recordings into a written document. The Transcriptionist will keep data in a locked private office. When the Transcriptionist is finished with that work, she will return all of the information to researcher. She is required by law to keep all information private and confidential.
- The researcher will ensure that the study uses fake names and fake locations to ensure the anonymity of the participants at all times. The researcher will keep all audio files and full transcripts in a locked file cabinet in a private home office. Information used

on the researcher's laptop will be password protected. The laptop will also be locked in the file cabinet in the researcher's home office when the researcher is not carrying it with her. When the researcher's study is completed, the audio files and transcripts will be locked in a file cabinet at Johns Hopkins University for a period of no more than three years in case the researcher's written work needs to be verified for accuracy.

COSTS

- Participants may need to pay for their transportation to and from the interview site as well as for any meal needed during that time.

COMPENSATION:

- Participants will receive $20 of compensation to cover the transportation costs to and from the interview site and for any meals purchased during that time. Participants will also receive $55 for their participation in the interview. If a participant decides to end an interview before the 90 minutes have passed, he will still be compensated in full for his time.
- The researcher also invites each participant to view the written transcript of the interview in which he participated and to view the interpretations of the interview made by the researcher.
- The participant is invited to comment on whether he considers the interpretations accurate or representative of his point of view and experiences. Participants who consent to be reached for follow up will not be compensated for their feedback.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS:

- You can ask questions about this research study now or at any time during the study, by talking to the researcher working. You can call the Student Investigator, Rabiah Khalil Abdullah, at 240-481-4794 (email: rabdull1@johnshopkins.edu) or the Principal Investigator, Dr. Norma Day-Vines at 410-516-7990 (email: Norma.Dayvines@jhu.edu).
- If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or feel that you have not been treated fairly, please call the Homewood Institutional Review Board at Johns Hopkins University at (410) 516-6580.

SIGNATURES

WHAT YOUR SIGNATURE MEANS:

Your signature below means that you understand the information in this consent form. Your signature also means that you agree to participate in the study.

By signing this consent form, you have not waived any legal rights you otherwise would have as a participant in a research study.

Participant's Signature **Date**

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent **Date**

(Investigator or HIRB Approved Designee)

CURRICULUM VITAE

Rabiah Khalil Abdullah
Email: rabdull1@johnshopkins.edu

FORMAL EDUCATION

Johns Hopkins University
Doctorate, Educational Leadership — May 2019

Georgetown University
Master of Science, Applied Linguistics — May 2012

The Treatment and Learning Centers
Certificate, Tutoring Practicum
"Strategies for Working with Students with Learning Disabilities" — May 2003

Johns Hopkins University
Master of Science, Education — May 2002

University of Maryland
Bachelor of Arts, English — May 2000

COURSERA and EDX COURSE CERTIFICATES

Johns Snow and the Cholera Outbreak of 1854
Harvard University Extension School — September 2017

Global Diplomacy—Diplomacy in the Modern World
University of London, School of Oriental and Asian Studies — August 2016

Psychological First Aid
Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg School of Public Health — December 2015

TEACHING AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION EXPERIENCE

Johns Hopkins University — Summer Session 2008 to present
Adjunct Faculty
Instruct *Linguistics for Teachers*, currently a requirement for students pursuing a Master's in Reading.

Roland Park Country School — August 2018 to present
Upper School English teacher

St. Andrew's Episcopal School — Academic year 2017-2018
English Language Intensive (ELI) teacher and Model United Nations assistant coach

The Barrie School Academic years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017
International Student Program Coordinator; Full time Humanities and English as a Second Language instructor; Model United Nation, and Model Arab League coach

Literacy Activities Supporting Empowerment of Refugees July-November 2016
Coordinated a literacy initiative between Barrie School students and recently-arrived refugees from the Middle East.

The Islamic Saudi Academy Academic year 2014-2015
High School English teacher
Instructed Grade 11 and Grade 12 English in accordance with International Baccalaureate Diploma Program guidelines.

Dar Al-Hekma University Spring Semester 2014
Full-time Faculty; General Education Department
Instructed writing courses for first-year students.
(DAH, located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, is dedicated to the education of Saudi women. Entering students must receive satisfactory TOEFL scores. English is the university-wide medium of instruction).

Georgetown University Law Center Spring 2012 and Fall 2013
Adjunct Faculty
Instructed *English for International Lawyers' Language Group* specifically designed for practicing lawyers enrolled in the international graduate degree in law (LLM) program.

Frederick Community College Fall 2008 to Fall 2014
Adjunct Faculty
Instructed *English 102* and *A Multicultural and Global Society*

Georgetown University Summer Sessions 2006 and 2007
Linguistics Department Summer Intern
Assisted with the instruction of a course entitled *U.S. Legal Discourse*, designed for highly-functioning international lawyers whose native languages were not English.

Rock Creek International School 2004-2006
Assistant Director of Advancement
Developed innovative ways to market and receive press coverage for the innovative dual-language English/Arabic immersion program for students in Pre-K through Grade 8.

JOURNALISM EXPERIENCE

The Washington Post
Freelance writer, Prince George's Weekly 1995 to 1997

Gannett News Service

Intern Researcher Summer 1996
The Rockford Register Star
Intern Reporter Summer 1995

The Diamondback (college newspaper)
Freelance writer 1994 to 1997

AWARDS

National Endowment for the Humanities, Landmarks of American Culture and History Workshop	2019
Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center: Arabic Language Scholarship	2017
AlWaleed Fellowship, National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations	2016
Full Doctoral Scholarship, Educational Leadership, JHU	2009
Chips/Quinn journalism scholarship, UMD	1995
Full Scholarship, Journalism, Freedom Forum/Project Excellence, UMD	1993
Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, 2nd place	1993
National Council of Teachers of English writing award for fiction	1992

PRESENTATIONS

Khalil, R (2018, January 19). *Educating Against Islamophobia.* Professional Development Workshop. Diversity Conference for Educators. St. Andrew's Episcopal School. Potomac, Maryland.

Khalil, R. (2017, October 18). *Discipline, Zero-Tolerance, and the Criminalization of America's Youth: A Peek at Trends in Juvenile Incarceration.* Lecture and Q&A. Doctoral Speaker Series, Johns Hopkins University School of Education. Baltimore, Maryland.

Khalil, R., Eakle, A. J., Sullivan, L. & Yim, C. (2013, May 4). *Global Literacy Practices That Make Sense in and out of School*. Interactive presentation. Capital Campaign Event, Johns Hopkins University School of Education. Baltimore, Maryland.

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